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RAIDING THE CONTINENT:
THE ORIGINS OF BRITISH SPECIAL SERVICE FORCES

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fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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This study examines the establishment and development of British Special Service forces - the commandos and airborne forces - from June 1940 to June 1941, with particular emphasis on the relationship between the role of these forces and the overall strategic policy. The problems arising from a lack of congruence between role and policy are enumerated, as well as the effects of the circumstantial influences of prior organizational interests and individual personalities. The tendency of special units to assume a life of their own, irrespective of rational requirements, is also addressed.

This study is intended to provide a historical basis, with appropriate caveats, for the contemporary decision-maker in dealing with the establishment and direction of special-purpose units. It is applicable in the current issues of the operational requirements for long range surveillance operations units and the interrelationship of counter-terrorist, Special Forces, ranger, and security assistance organizations. (p. 40)

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ABSTRACT

RAIDING THE CONTINENT: THE ORIGINS OF BRITISH SPECIAL SERVICE FORCES,
by Captain Howard J. Steers, USAR, 138 pages.

This study examines the rationale underlying the establishment and maintenance of the British commandos and airborne forces during the period June 1940 to June 1941. The work illustrates the vital link between overall strategic policy and the role of special units. The difficulties encountered when the two are not congruent are detailed, as well as the irrational influences of personality and prior organizational interest. The tendency of special units to assume a life of their own is also highlighted.

This study provides historical experience which provides caveats to the contemporary decision-maker in the formation of special units. It is applicable in the current debates on the long-range surveillance operations units and the Special Forces, ranger, and advisory assistance relationships.

With acknowledgement to the members
of my Committee and to my
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INTRODUCTION

War is a time of uncertainty, and one of the most intractable problems for the military planner, either in preparing for war or in waging it, is the allocation of resources normally insufficient to provide for every eventuality. If men, material, and time were unlimited, forces could be optimally structured to meet all contingencies, but even then, the nature of war being what it is, the contingencies that do arise will likely not have been unexpected. With this caveat in mind, the orthodox planner favors the establishment of general-purpose forces. These forces are adequate in most circumstances, and their inherent flexibility results in the most efficient use of the resources available.

Advocates of special-purpose forces would point out, however, that in particular situations an optimized force is not only desirable, but indeed absolutely essential if success is to be achieved. In forces dependent upon technology, this is self evident; the argument usually concerns the probability of need, in the overall strategy, of the particular capability the technology bestows. The most intense, and perhaps most interesting, debates, however, arise over the formation of special-purpose forces centered around men rather than machines. This is primarily a military, as opposed to naval or air, issue, and as such the dispute has proven a fairly constant one throughout military history. The parameters of such disputes are therefore fairly well defined.

These military special forces base their effectiveness on

rigorous selection, intensive training, and an elitist esprit de corps. Their effectiveness, in the particular conditions for which they were established, is normally not at issue. They do, however, involve a greater investment in resources than line units—resources, including aggressive leaders, that are consequently diverted from the line units. The trade-off in overall effectiveness is thus the main bone of contention. The special forces can be justified, it is taken for granted, if their role is a vital one in the context of the overall campaign plan. If they are not required, however, they are in effect a waste of valuable resources. It is consequently incumbent upon their proponent to identify clearly their role, to integrate it into overall policy, and to support it only as long as it contributes to the overall effort. In practice, however, such forces, by their very existence, develop a self-justification unrelated to policy. The reasons for this are many. Personal interests are normally involved. The need for their specialized expertise is usually intermittent and, in the interim, planners are apt to find employment for uncommitted forces, regardless of their original role, to meet the needs at hand. Special forces thus assume a life of their own, and the transfigurations they may undergo during it are remarkable.

The function of the military historian may be seen primarily as the explanation of the course of past events, rather than the critique of them, in order to provide the reader with experience that can be applied to contemporary problems. The debate over the role of special forces continues in the United States Army today, as attempts are made to define the relationship of airborne, ranger, special forces, and

anti-terrorist units to the conventional general-purpose forces. This thesis will examine an earlier example of special forces, established in response to a perceived requirement, and will document the problems encountered in regard to the interrelationships of policy, role, doctrine, organization, personality, and conflicting military requirements. The difference between the ideal comprehensive and rational examination of force structure, and the reality of continuous improvisations, will be revealed. It is hoped that an understanding of these factors, in a historical context, will prove of use to the contemporary planner.

Of all the troops of the British Empire that fought in the Second World War, perhaps those that most stir the imagination are the commandos and airborne forces. This was true then as well as now. The classic film version of Shakespeare's Henry V, produced by Sir Laurence Olivier in 1944, was dedicated to these units, epitomizing as they did the spirit and determination shown by the 'band of brothers' at Agincourt. The simile seemed a natural one. Churchill often referred to these units in Shakespearean terms, and the feeling was reciprocal. General Gale, in the order of the day to his 6th Airborne Division prior to the Normandy drop, included the passage from Henry V '...and gentlemen in England, no abed...'

The commandos and airborne forces--termed Special Service troops in the early years--were originally established to raid the Continent, and it is in this role that the former in particular are most readily remembered. The phrase 'the steel hand from the sea' comes readily to mind. Some of the raids conducted by these forces, such as at Bruneval and St. Nazaire, can indeed be considered models of their kind. Both

types of units proved themselves invaluable, in many circumstances, throughout the war. This study, however, will consider only the period from Dunkirk until the German invasion of the Soviet Union, for it is this segment which provides the most instructive view of the problems encountered with such special forces. This was, so to speak, the 'British war', the start of which saw the determination of the original requirement for these units and the end of which was marked by a greatly changed strategic situation, with its own peculiar demands. The caution must consequently be given that the Special Service troops will be examined solely in terms of their original frames of reference, rather than with respect to their later morale value, the later value of the early operational lessons learned, or their later utility in the prosecution of the war. By the time that all these came to pass, the strategic situation had twice changed, drastically and unexpectedly, from that of June 1940. These later benefits were useful by-products of the forces then in existence, but have little to do with an assessment of the manner in which the Special Service forces met the requirements of their original aim.

The evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk in June 1940 marked a major change in the British strategy for the prosecution of the war. All efforts up to then had been oriented toward a land battle on the Continent. The evacuation raised the immediate requirement for some type of operations to tie down German troops along the coast, in aid of the land battle still taking place in the southern part of France. Before anything of this nature could be accomplished, however, the surrender of the French posed the greater problem of how

a greatly weakened British army could continue to conduct offensive operations against the Germans on the Continent, particularly at a time when the main object of the army was likely to be the repulse of a German invasion of the British Isles. As the initiative was clearly in the hands of the Germans, a number of requirements were also identified for contingency forces to counter a German invasion of Eire, or a German takeover of Gibraltar.

The only feasible answer to the problem of offensive operations on the Continent appeared to be that of raiding, a form of warfare in which the British were thought to have demonstrated, historically, a particular expertise. Both Churchill, as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, and the War Office favored a raiding policy, although their ideas of the manner in which it should be undertaken differed markedly. This conflict was never to be fully resolved and would cause most of the difficulty encountered during the early life of the Special Service forces.

The British had not paid much attention to the conduct of raiding in the inter-war period. In a time of restricted budgets and an overall strategy that foresaw no requirement for raiding forces, this was understandable enough. At the beginning of the war, a Royal Marine Brigade was formed by the Admiralty, primarily for large-scale raiding. This unit was seemingly to support only a naval campaign, for its role was not integrated with the grand strategy then being followed. The potential employment of this unit by the Admiralty is unclear to this day. The brigade was just becoming operationally ready at the time of Dunkirk, and it was soon earmarked for the contingency operations in

Eire and later for use against the Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic islands. It was actually used twice, in the occupation of Iceland and in the abortive assault on Dakar in September 1940. For the whole of the period studied, therefore, the brigade was not available for offensive operations against the Continent, and other forces had to be found for this purpose.

The War Office, at the start of the Norwegian campaign, had created ad hoc units termed independent companies for a guerrilla warfare and raiding role in support of the conventional forces in Norway. By the time these units were formed and employed in action, however, the situation had changed to the extent that they were used very much as normal infantry units. They were available for raiding at the start of the period covered, but were in fact on the verge of being disbanded. There were elements in the War Office that saw little prospect for conventional raiding on the Continent, and favored a policy of unconventional warfare. The War Office soon proceeded to establish a new type of unit, modeled along the lines of the Boer commandos of old, and intended for this unconventional raiding role. The analogy was, in retrospect, a false one, for the mobility given to the Boer commandos by their horses enabled them to operate throughout the area of operations, whereas the mobility given to the British units by landing craft restricted them to targets along the coast. They could not, therefore, operate in a true guerrilla role. Under the circumstances, however, there was no other alternative. A point of consequence was that the commandos were envisaged as a method for the British army to remain in the fight. Projects for conducting guerrilla warfare by using the indigenous peoples of the occupied countries were being

initiated by other agencies, although, in the early days of haste and confusion, the two concepts were used somewhat interchangeably.

A new, joint agency was then formed under the Chiefs of Staff Committee to conduct raiding operations along the occupied coasts of Europe. This organization, the Directorate of Combined Operations, encountered considerable resistance within the normal service machinery, and was never fully integrated into the system. There was some initial confusion between the conventional and unconventional raiding roles, until a separate organization, the Special Operations Executive, was formed to handle all unconventional operations. The directive given to the Directorate of Combined Operations was ultimately far more limited in scope than first conceived. For the mission of conventional raiding on the occupied coasts, it could call on the independent companies, the newly formed commandos, and the planned airborne forces. Larger units for such raids, of the size of an army brigade group, were promised but never assigned; and the Royal Marines, as mentioned, were not available. The Directorate thus found itself forced to employ units which had been established for other roles, and which were also, due to hostile critics in the War Office, twice changed in structure by early 1941.

Churchill had also called for special units to raid the Continent, and the commandos, catching his imagination, became one of his proteges. Churchill was entirely opposed, however, to the idea of small raids advocated by the War Office. In his view, minor operations of a guerrilla nature were not military operations in the accepted sense, and were best left to the Special Operations Executive. Churchill demanded large-scale conventional raids, and in this respect the Dieppe operation in 1942

was a direct descendant of this policy, rather than a precursor of the Normandy landings. Churchill's support of the commandos was for their use in these larger operations. This idea did have some justification in the pre-war amphibious doctrine, which required the use of special troops for the initial surprise assault, but it was far removed from the role for which the Special Service troops had been formed, organized, and trained. Their unsuitability for such operations was demonstrated when they were used in emergencies as regular forces in the Middle East.

Churchill's opposition to small raids, and the fiascos that resulted from the first two raids in June and July 1940, caused him to ban small raids on the coast of Europe. Fairly determined attempts were made through March 1941 to have this restriction lifted, but with no result. The primary arguments used in favor of small raids were the effect the ban was having on the personnel in the units and the military experience that could thereby be obtained. The use of a series of small raids to boost British morale was never really considered; Churchill in any event made it clear that he thought that small raids, indicating as they did British weakness, would be counterproductive.

The net result of this difference in views was that, for all the time and effort expended, at the highest levels of the government, on the Special Service forces, there was a very meager return. The few raids conducted were small and insignificant, and by March 1941 the policy of raiding the Continent had, for all practical purposes, been abandoned. The German invasion of the Soviet Union did cause a resurgence of the raiding policy, but the spur to this was the primarily political need to do something which could be construed as military

aid to the Soviets, rather than military requirements in themselves. The new policy was also made possible only by the abandonment of the contingency operations, now deemed less likely because of the German involvement in the Soviet Union.

The forces and organization created for the original raiding policy, in the main, outlived its demise. Churchill, dissatisfied with the limited War Office policy and the support given to it by the first Director of Combined Operations, appointed his old friend Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes to the post in July 1940. Keyes initially sided with Churchill on the issue of large-scale operations, but he soon came to realize that the resources available prevented these for some time to come. He was determined on offensive action, and consequently began to argue himself for small raids. These operations still being denied, he began to look further afield for opportunities for action. Raiding in the Mediterranean, or use of the Special Service troops for some of the contingency operations, were possibilities that were pursued. Churchill, who was impatient for any worthwhile offensive operation and who thought that the Chiefs of Staff were not being responsive enough, supported Keyes in his disregard of the limitations of area and type of operation found in the original directive to the Director of Combined Operations.

The combination of Churchill's support for the commandos and bar on small raids, Keyes' desire for offensive operations and his dislike of the limitations of the directive, the establishment of the Special Operations Executive, the failure to clearly define the role of the Special Service troops, the influence of the pre-war doctrine requiring

special troops in the initial wave of an amphibious assault, and the diversion of the Royal Marines for contingency operations caused the commandos to be transformed from an unconventional, guerrilla-type raiding force to regular units serving a primarily Royal Marine function. At one time during this period, the suggestion was actually made that all the commandos be converted into Royal Marines, but this was rejected on the grounds that it would exclude the army from offensive operations. The raiding role, as previously noted, was to be revived at the end of 1941 and would continue throughout the war. The Royal Marines themselves then began to convert to the commando organization, and they have retained this role ever since. This transformation of the Special Service troops holds many lessons for the planner, most particularly because at no time during the period was a logical and comprehensive review of the requirements conducted. Rather than being a programmed response to a clear strategic need, the Special Service organization grew like Topsy, subject to many extraneous influences of personality and circumstance. The forces took on a life of their own, and it was only in March 1941 that the question was raised about the size to which they had grown. Even then, this was left unanswered, due to the vested interests that had by that time been formed.

The airborne forces, also originally under the operational control of the Directorate of Combined Operations, are examined as an interesting contrast to the development of the commandos. The structural arrangements in their case were rather different than those concerning the commandos, and the airborne forces were much more the sole responsibility of the Air Staff, a body inherently hostile

to their existence. Their role was even less clearly defined than that of the commandos. The fault for this can be evenly attributed to all the parties concerned, but the interesting point is that, because of this lack of a role, and their organizational subordination, the Air Ministry was enabled to prevent any growth during this period. The arguments for and against the airborne forces aside, this growth limitation, in the circumstances, was probably the correct response, one that differed greatly from the case of the commandos.

The study closes with an examination of the change in policy occasioned by the German invasion of the Soviet Union. The commandos had by then achieved basically their final form, and their further development through the war was a continuum. This, however, is another subject in itself.

CHAPTER I

BRITISH RAIDING FORCES FROM THE OUTBREAK OF WAR TO DUNKIRK

The outbreak of war in September 1939 found the British armed forces poorly prepared for raiding operations. The limited interest in this form of warfare during the pre-war years was due primarily to that perennial bugbear of British defense planners, a severely restricted budget, in combination with the lack of any perceived requirement for a raiding capability. The Admiralty had formed a committee under Admiral Sir Charles Madden to define the function of the Royal Marine Corps, created in June 1923 by the amalgamation of the Royal Marine Light Infantry and the Royal Marine Artillery, and in the final committee report of 6 August 1924 the recommendation was made that the Corps be trained to provide a striking force that, among other tasks, could raid enemy coastlines, under the direction of the fleet commander. This committee had been instructed to formulate an ideal policy based on naval requirements, 'irrespective of financial or other extraneous difficulties', and so proposed the establishment of a Royal Marine Brigade of four battalions, half regular and half reserve, to accomplish the tasks outlined. In doing so, the committee cautioned that financial stringencies might prevent the implementation of the recommendations for some time to come.¹

This proved an accurate prediction, for no action was taken until the Abyssinian crisis in 1936. The British planners were then

faced with the possibility of having to conduct raiding operations in the Red Sea, or even against the Italian mainland. The only concrete step taken, however, was the construction of seventeen steel punts for use by submarine raiding parties. These were stored at Malta after the crisis, and remained there until the outbreak of the war in 1939.² The neglect of amphibious operations in general was rectified to some extent with the establishment of the Inter-Services Training and Development Centre in 1938. This organization was responsible for 'the study and development of the material, technique, and tactics necessary for all types of combined operations', which included sea-borne raiding.³ In conjunction with this, the Centre secured approval in early 1939 for the construction of four aluminum punts for trials, as the old steel punts were not deemed fully satisfactory. The suggestion was also made that the Royal Marines maintain a small force trained for raiding in peacetime, so as to be ready for raiding immediately when war broke out, but this idea, most probably due to personnel constraints, was not pursued further.⁴

The start of the war thus found the British with the old punts at Malta and one new punt completed in the United Kingdom, and with no troops trained, or even earmarked, for raiding operations. In the context of the military situation at the time this was acceptable, and preparations continued at a leisurely pace. In late September 1939, the Adjutant General Royal Marines, Lieutenant General A. G. B. Bourne, produced a paper recommending the formation of a Royal Marine Brigade of three battalions, along the lines of the Madden Committee's proposal. This was approved by the Admiralty on 19 October 1939, without reference to the Chiefs of Staff Committee. The actual formation of the brigade

would take some considerable time, as the Royal Marines had started the war with only 1,082 men in the Royal Fleet Reserve, and the Corps was almost wholly committed to sea-going requirements. Priority was also being given to the establishment of a Royal Marine Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation. The Royal Marine Brigade, including the bulk of its officers, would consequently have to be found from scratch. Borne interviewed each officer candidate personally, and the officer training started on 1 December 1939. The full brigade was not scheduled to be combat ready until the end of June 1940.⁵

The brigade had apparently been formed for a purely naval function, as a handy contingency force, rather than to fulfill a defined strategic requirement. The commander-designate of the brigade, Brigadier A. C. St. Clair-Morford, met with his key commanders and staff officers at the Royal Marine Depot at Eastney in early October 1939 to define more clearly the purpose of the unit. The primary role of the unit was perceived by this conference to be that of raiding, in large-scale operations involving the entire brigade. The recommendation was therefore made that a fourth battalion be added, to secure the beach while the other three operated inland.⁶ Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, approved, and the fourth battalion was established by December 1939. The battalions themselves were also slightly enlarged, the total strength of the brigade being set at 113 officers and 2,545 other ranks, with a ten percent reserve.

The first formal principles for the employment of the brigade were framed by Rear Admiral T. S. V. Phillips, the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, on 22 December 1939. He thought that limited raiding operations at night on selected points of the enemy coast was

something for which preparations should be undertaken immediately, though he gave no indications of where he thought such operations might take place. He pointed out that the Royal Marine Brigade would be ideal for this task; it could be lightly armed, and its organization, equipment, and training optimized for raiding. Souwesters, for example, could be worn in place of steel helmets, and sand shoes instead of boots. The equipment needed for this role would not conflict with the requirements of the other services, then involved in their own expansion programs.⁷ The Deputy Chiefs of Staff Committee considered this matter on 3 January 1940, and agreed that a unit such as the Royal Marine Brigade, which could be used at comparatively short notice 'for any suitable operation which might be projected', would be 'of great value'.⁸

A raiding capability was still not demanded by the overall strategic plan, and the Admiralty remained the main proponent of the concept. The War Office, which would be responsible for supplying much of the military equipment for the brigade, was apparently not kept fully informed of its development. This lack of information, combined with the Army's own demands for equipment, made the War Office a bit reluctant to accede to all the Admiralty's requests.⁹ St. Clair-Morford therefore met with representatives of the War Office on 1 March 1940 to resolve some of the problems. During this meeting, he defined the primary role of the brigade as raiding--'tip and run' affairs of a few hours, rather than days. Amphibious assaults and cooperation with the field army were considered to be secondary roles. The brigade was to be organized and trained for raiding, and would carry nothing that could not fit into the assault landing craft then starting to come into service. Further equipment and training would be required before the

brigade would be able to undertake extended operations. The brigade was not scheduled to be combat ready by 1 August 1940, though St. Clair-Morford thought it could be used earlier in an emergency.¹⁰

The opening of the Norwegian theater of war on 9 April 1940 seemed to present the first real opportunity for raiding operations. The Royal Marines were caught with the brigade still untrained, however, and the only forces the Corps had available consisted of the detachments of three capital ships then in drydock a few antiaircraft guns, and the detachments of the ships off Norway. Royal Marine operations in this campaign were thus limited to some very minor landings.¹¹

The unreadiness of the Royal Marines was compensated for by a section in the War Office termed Military Intelligence, Research, or MI(R). This section had originally been termed General Staff, Research, and was a loosely controlled element of the War Office reporting directly to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Under its first head, it was concerned with army education, but things changed markedly when Major J. F. C. Holland took it over late in 1938. Holland had served in Ireland during 'the troubles', and this had resulted in an abiding interest in guerrilla warfare. His proposals for preparation for unconventional warfare were supported by the Deputy Director of Military Intelligence, and on 13 April 1939 the Chief of the Imperial General Staff formally tasked the section with the study of guerrilla warfare and the preparation of guerrilla field service regulations. The section was also expanded at this time by the addition of Major C. McV. Gubbins, and it was eventually transferred to the Military Intelligence Division of the General Staff. By June 1939, Gubbins had produced three pamphlets:

The Art of Guerrilla Warfare, Partisan Leader's Handbook, and How to Use High Explosives.¹²

With the start of the Norwegian campaign, MI(R) attempted to put the theories it had expounded into practice. Its first effort, Operation KNIFE, was scheduled for mid-April 1940. Six officers were to land by submarine at Sogne Fjord, ski over to the Oslo-Bergen railway, and blow it up. This operation was aborted, although another one was apparently run by the section later, with more success. Some of the officers from the KNIFE team were then used to set up a school for unconventional warfare at Inverailort in Scotland.¹³

More extended operations were envisaged for a new type of unit that MI(R) proposed at the start of the campaign, termed an independent company. These proposals must have received some support from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, as the War Office acted with unaccustomed alacrity in forming these units. On 16 April 1940, the General Officers Commanding of Eastern, Western, Northern, and Scottish Commands and of Northern Ireland were directed to form an independent company each from the territorial divisions under them. On 18 April 1940, a further call went out to Eastern, Western, and Northern Commands for yet another five independent companies.¹⁴

These companies were to be formed under the direction of Gubbins, who was recalled from an assignment involving the establishment of Czech and Polish resistance organizations. The companies had a strength of 22 officers and 267 other ranks, and were comprised of a company headquarters, consisting of a command and administrative section, an intelligence section, a signal section, a support section, an ammunition section, a medical detachment, and an engineer detachment, along with

three platoons of three sections each. The companies had a total of 70 pistols, 202 rifles, 9 sniper rifles, 13 light machine guns, and 10 antitank rifles. All the personnel, with the exception of a few officers and interpreters provided by the War Office, were volunteers from the territorial divisions. The companies were formed on a building-block basis, i.e., each battalion of the territorial divisions provided a section, so that each brigade provided a platoon, and the divisional troops supplied their appropriate sections.¹⁵ There was no supply organization as such, but 50 to 60 tons of stores, including a special issue of snowshoes, arctic boots, sheepskin coats, and alpine rucksacks, were allotted to each company and administered by the headquarters element. On active service, each company was also given £4,000 for local purchases. The original concept was that each company should be organized as a shipborne unit, the ship serving both as its base and its means of transportation to and from operations. No transport was therefore provided.

The role of the independent companies was originally defined as that of guerrillas. By their own successful small actions, they were to raise the morale of the local populace and then, following the procedures outlined in the MI(R) pamphlets, organize indigenous guerrilla bands. Their training was thus to be directed towards four types of operations: harassing of communications by destruction or interruption of railways, roads, tracks, etc.; stalking and mopping up isolated enemy posts or parties; ambushing small parties or supply columns; and communicating with local centers of resistance or relief of such centers if attacked. In all these operations, the value of operating at night was stressed. There was a great emphasis on fitness, with much roadwork

and cross-country running, until every man was to be able to run 20 miles on the flat and 15 to 20 miles in the hills. The platoons had to be able to operate independently of the company, to a common plan, and the sections likewise, at least for periods of up to 72 hours. This was the reason for the high percentage of officers in the unit, extending down to section commander. The men themselves had to be self-reliant, existing on what they could carry or obtain from the local inhabitants, as well as being proficient in first aid.¹⁶

Events in Norway resulted in an acceleration of the mobilization schedule, the last of the mobilization orders being issued on 22 April 1940. The first company was to be ready to move overseas by 27 April 1940, the last company by 4 May 1940. What this schedule meant for the companies on a real-time basis is seen in the experience of No. 1 Independent Company, which departed for Rosyth on its journey to Norway only four days after it assembled at Marton. The quality of the various companies differed. They were fully equipped for their intended role, and they were all filled with men in excellent physical condition, but as they were formed from territorial divisions they were thus largely composed of green troops. The mobilization schedule provided practically no time for unit training, and one later report states that some of their personnel had never fired a live round until they reached Norway.¹⁷

While the companies were assembling, the strategic situation in Norway, with the failure of the attempt against Trondheim and the impending evacuation of Aandalsnes and Namsos, was steadily deteriorating. This worsened situation was to result in a drastic change in the mode of employment of the companies, the apparent subject of a meeting in the

office of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on 29 April 1940.¹⁸ The companies would no longer be able to operate in southern Norway as the harassing arm of a solidly established field army. The Germans, with the air cover provided from their new base at Trondheim, were free to advance along the coast towards Narvik, and the pressing need of the moment was the blocking, or at least the delay, of such a move. The British force at Namsos was first ordered to provide a detachment to delay from Namsos to Mosjoen. When the commander replied that he was unable to comply with these instructions, the Scots Guards at Narvik had to send a company to Bodo as an interim measure. The only other troops readily at hand in the United Kingdom were the independent companies, and it was accordingly decided to form five of them into a group under Gubbin's command, termed 'Scissorsforce'.

On 2 May 1940, a mobilization order was issued for a Headquarters 'Special Service', a 'Special Service' Signal Detachment, and a 'Special Service' Administration Group to serve as the command organization for 'Scissorsforce'. No. 1 Independent Company had already sailed for Mo, and Nos. 3, 4, and 5 Independent Companies, along with the Headquarters 'Special Service', would be shipped from the Clyde on the morning of 4 May 1940. No. 2 Independent Company and the 'Special Service' Administration Group were to follow.¹⁹ Gubbins' task was to prevent small German sea or air landed parties from occupying Bodo, Mo, and Mosjoen. He was to take all possible steps, using demolitions and harassing tactics, to impede any major German overland advance. Prolonged frontal resistance was not to be offered; the companies were to endeavor to operate on the flank of the German forces, attacking their lines of communication. Gubbins was informed that he could ask for

further independent companies, or reinforcements of tanks, bren-gun carriers, 3.7" howitzers, or 3" mortars, provided he could be sure of landing them, employing them to good purpose, concealing them from air attack, and supplying them. He was to maintain a 30-day stock of supplies, and was instructed to ascertain what small ships he might find necessary for transport. In addition, he was given eight Indian army officers to employ as he saw fit, making the maximum use of their knowledge of unconventional warfare and operations in mountainous country.²⁰

These instructions seem rather confusing, for although they were framed with the guerrilla role still in mind, the reinforcements offered were clearly not consonant with that method of warfare. The worsening situation in Norway actually resulted in the independent companies being employed much in the manner of normal infantry. Gubbins himself, however, was partly at fault in this, for there might have been opportunities for using guerrilla tactics. As Major General J. L. Moulton points out in his study of the Norwegian campaign, when Nos. 4 and 5 Independent Companies were cut off at Mosjoen by a small German landing in their rear, 'the pretensions of the improvised British force to guerrilla expertise were at once exposed'. Instead of acting as a guerrilla force and continuing their delay over extremely favorable terrain, the companies were immediately withdrawn by sea.²¹

The independent company organization was not entirely suited for the conventional role in which they were employed, and the recognition of this resulted in the gradual absorption of the 24th Guards Brigade into 'Scissorsforce' during the course of operations. The five independent companies remaining in the United Kingdom were requested on

15 May 1940, but were prevented from sailing to Norway by shipping difficulties. The campaign ended for the independent companies with the evacuation of Bodo. Nos. 1 and 4 Independent Companies were brought directly back to Scotland on 29 May 1940, while the others passed through Harstad in Norway first. The last independent company left Norway on 8 June 1940.²²

On their return from Norway, Nos. 1 through 5 Independent Companies were retained as a group in Scotland for refitting and training. Gubbins returned to the War Office to start organizing a resistance movement within the United Kingdom, in anticipation of a German invasion. Command of the group of Nos. 1 through 5 Independent Companies was assumed by Lieutenant Colonel H. C. Stockwell. Whether a second group was formed from the companies that had not gone to Norway is uncertain. In any event, with the end of the campaign for which they were created, the future usefulness of the companies was questioned by some elements in the War Office, and Stockwell soon received an order to disband his five companies. He ignored this order, which was rescinded three days later. With the Germans seemingly on the verge of invasion, the need for formed units for the defense of the United Kingdom was apparent, and the independent companies were used to shore up the defenses in such areas as Cornwall and the Scilly Islands.²³

The period from September 1939 until June 1940 had thus seen no use of raiding forces by the British. The Royal Marines, earmarked for the general raiding role, but with no specified objectives, were just becoming operationally ready at the time of Dunkirk, and would soon be diverted from other types of operations. The independent

companies had not been able to operate in the raiding role in Norway, and the War Office apparently felt that there would be little scope for their type of operations against the German-occupied Continent. The War Office would in fact now look to more unconventional forms of operations, although many of the problems encountered with the independent companies--the establishment of ad hoc forces in a time of great haste and confusion, without a clear policy for their use--would reappear during the establishment of yet newer types of raiding forces.

ENDNOTES--CHAPTER I

1. File 'Royal Marines. Functions and Training' 5 Sep 23, including 'Report on the Committee on the Corps of Royal Marines' (commonly known as the Madden Report) 6 Aug 24, ADM 1/8664/134. The Bibliography contains the listing of documents from the British Public Records Office that are used herein.
2. L. E. H. Maund, Assault From the Sea, (London 1949), pp. 3-5; Amphibious Warfare Headquarters, Combined Operations Organisation 1940-1945, (AWHQ 1956), p. 9; COS 450 'Provision and Maintenance of Motor Landing Craft' 27 Mar 36, CAB 53/27; COS 173rd Mtg 4 May 36, CAB 53/6; and CID 279th Mtg 25 Jun 36, CAB 2/6.
3. COS 221st Mtg 4 Nov 37, CAB 54/2; DCOS(IT) 1 'Composition and Terms of Reference' 30 Nov 37 and DCOS(IT) 2 'Reference From the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee' 30 Nov 37, CAB 54/13; DCOS(IT) 1st Mtg 21 Mar 38, CAB 54/12; and DCOS(IT) 6 'Memorandum by ACNS' 30 Mar 38 and DCOS(IT) 7 'Joint Report on Establishment of a Training and Development Centre' 2 May 38, CAB 54/13.
4. DCOS(IT) 24 'Coastal Raids: Provision of Landing Punts' 23 Mar 39 and DCOS(IT) 35 'The Situation as Regards Material and Personnel for Landing Attacks' 30 Jun 39, CAB 54/13; DCOS(IT) 6th Mtg 28 Mar 39, CAB 54/12; and DCOS 40th Mtg 10 Jul 39, CAB 54/2.
5. 'Interview with General Sir A. G. B. Bourne KCB DSO MVO' 4 Aug 42, DEFE 2/699; 'Provisional War Establishment of RM Brigade' 15 Dec 39, ADM 1/10334.
6. Interview with Major General J. L. Moulton by author, 10 Nov 78.
7. DCOS(39) 'Offensive Operations' 22 Dec 39, CAB 82/4.
8. WO Brief on DCOS(39) 67 2 Jan 40, WO 193/387 and DCOS(40) 1st Mtg 3 Jan 40, CAB 82/2.
9. 'Notes for Representative at Meeting 1 March 1940 on Royal Marine Brigade' 29 Feb 40, WO 193/378.
10. 'Note on Royal Marine Brigade' 2 Mar 40, WO 193/378.
11. J. L. Moulton, The Royal Marines, (London 1973), pp. 93-94 makes mention of some of these.
12. M. R. D. Foot, SOE in France, (London 1966), pp. 1-6.
13. P. Kemp, No Colours or Crest, (London 1958), pp. 6-19.
14. 20/Misc/1717(AG1a) 18 Apr 40, WO 106/1889.

15. J. L. Moulton, A Study of Warfare in Three Dimension, (Athens, Ohio 1967), pp. 236, 237. The companies were formed from the following divisions:

No. 1 Ind Coy--52 Div	No. 6 Ind Coy--9 Div
No. 2 Ind Coy--53 Div	No. 7 Ind Coy--15 Div
No. 3 Ind Coy--54 Div	No. 8 Ind Coy--18 Div
No. 4 Ind Coy--55 Div	No. 9 Ind Coy--38 Div
No. 5 Ind Coy--1 London Div	No. 10 Ind Coy--66 Div
16. 79/MOB/3433/129(M) (Mob1) 22 Apr 40, 79/MOB/3433/140(M) (Mob1) 24 Apr 40, and DMT to GOCs Districts and N. Ireland and Division Commanders of Territorial Divisions 24 Apr 40, WO 106/1889.
17. 'The Independent Companies--Lt. Col. Trevor, No. Cdo' and 'Account by Captain McClean of No. 1 Independent Company', both undated, DEFE 2/699.
18. Diary of Major General R. H. Dewing 29 Apr 40, in possession of his son.
19. 79/MOB/3433/167(P) (Mob 1) 2 May 40, WO 106/1889.
20. HQ, NWEF, 'Instructions to Lt. Col. C. McV. Gubbins M.C., Commander Independent Companies' 2 May 40, WO 106/1944.
21. Moulton, A Study of Warfare, p. 238.
22. For an account of the Independent Companies' actions, see C. Buckley, Norway, The Commandos, Dieppe, (London 1951), pp. 137-143; T. K. Derry, The Campaign in Norway, (London 1952), pp. 162-192; and Moulton, A Study of Warfare, pp. 236-244.
23. General Sir Hugh Stockwell in letter to author, 21 Nov 78.

CHAPTER II

PLANS AND PREPARATIONS FOR RAIDING THE CONTINENT

The withdrawal of British forces from Norway and France resulted in a completely new, and unplanned for, strategic situation. Priority clearly had to be given to preparations for the defense of the United Kingdom against a possible invasion. The War Office nevertheless immediately started wrestling with the problem of getting the army back into the fight against the Germans. Any offensive operations conducted from the United Kingdom would have to be amphibious ones. The forces and material would soon be in hand for a brigade assault, and this capability would be used in contingency operations planned for Eire and the Portuguese Atlantic islands, the Azores and Cape Verdes, as well as in the actual attack on Dakar in September 1940. The Royal Marine Brigade, now operationally ready, would be held on standby for these contingency operations into late 1941.

The use of this amphibious capability for large-scale raids on the Continent was not deemed feasible by the War Office. Even smaller conventional raids, such as could be carried out by the independent companies, were at first not considered profitable--hence the disbandment orders for these units. The possibilities for unconventional operations, however, seemed much more inviting. Lieutenant Colonel D. W. Clarke, the Military Assistant to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, pondered over this matter on the evening of 4 June 1940, and formed the

concept of using small groups of hand-picked men, modeled along the lines of the Boer commandos of the South African War, for guerrilla-type operations. Clarke was familiar with the writings of Deneys Reitz regarding the commandos, and he had spent his boyhood in South Africa. He reasoned that the British could use their command of the sea to provide the mobility required 'to aim mosquito stings with telling effect' upon the Germans, much as the Boers had done after the defeat of their main forces in the field. Clarke even proposed that these troops be termed 'commandos'.

Clarke explained his ideas to Lieutenant General Sir John Dill, who held the position of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, on 5 June 1940. Dill approved the concept with two provisos. The creation of the commandos would not divert any existing unit from its task of home defense, and only the barest minimum of equipment was to be provided. Dill apparently received covering approval for the scheme from Churchill on 6 June 1940. As will be seen below, Churchill was at the time working on similar ideas of his own. There were some major differences in his concept, but in the press of events the various schemes were apparently merged together, with no clear distinction.

On the same day, 6 June 1940, Clarke was accordingly instructed to establish a new section in the War Office under Brigadier O. M. Lund, the Deputy Director of Military Operations, to be termed MO 9. He was directed to get a raid mounted across the Channel at the earliest possible moment, most probably in order to provide a diversion for the Allied forces still fighting in the south of France. As Clarke describes in his book, the first task was to find suitable personnel, and a 'ready-made solution to hand' was the independent companies, then on the verge

of disbandment. It does seem odd that one type of raiding unit was being disestablished just as another was being formed, but at this time Clarke was thinking of a much more unconventional organization than that represented by the independent companies. The commandos were to more of a pool of specialists who could be detailed off as necessary for an individual operation, and who would only then be equipped from a central stock of material. In effect, he was to work in a manner very similar to MI(R), the principal difference seeming to be that MI(R) was then concerned with guerrilla operations by indigenous forces, whereas Clarke was looking only for a way for the British army to continue the struggle. The two sections were similar enough at this stage, however, to be considered somewhat interchangeably, thus adding to the confusion.

Clarke immediately went up to Scotland to see the five independent companies that had not gone to Norway. He selected two officers from these units, and directed them to pick a hundred men each for the first raid. The total was increased soon after to 25 officers and 350 other ranks, the whole being designated variously as No. 11 Independent Company or No. 11 Commando. After this unit had been formed, Nos. 6, 7, 8, and 9 Independent Companies were to be disbanded.¹ Clarke then approached the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff for an Admiralty counterpart, and Captain R. A. Garnons-Williams then in the process of blocking Zeebrugge, was designated the Admiralty contact under the Operations Division. A few staff officers and civilian assistants were gathered into No 9, and work began on two projects simultaneously. The first of these was the mounting of a raid by 180 personnel of No. 11 Independent Company/Commando in the area of Le Touquet on the night of 23/24 June 1940, termed Operation COLLAR. The size of the raid had been governed

by the equipment and transport available. At that time, there were, for example, only 40 'tommy-guns' in the United Kingdom, and all that Garnons-Williams could find to get the troops across were six crash boats borrowed from the Royal Air Force.² The second project was the raising of ten commandos, each of ten troops of 3 officers and 50 other ranks.

The commandos were to be formed in a manner that would encourage the initiative displayed by the Boer commandos of old. Only the lieutenant colonels commanding the units were to be selected by the War Office. They would then select their own junior officers, and these would in turn select their own men. The commandos would not be housed in barracks, each man being given a monetary allowance in lieu of accommodation and messing. This would add to their individual initiative, and would cut down on the unit overhead. The unit would be allotted a house near the sea as a headquarters, to which the men would report every day for training. There would similarly be no unit equipment or transportation, these being provided from a central pool when necessary for training or operations. Clarke mentions in his book that more difficulties were caused by this failure to ask for equipment than would have occurred if a more orthodox establishment had been submitted. These measures did conform to Dill's strictures, however, that no existing units were to be diverted for raiding and that equipment demands would be kept to a minimum. It is probable that only in the crisis following the evacuation from Dunkirk that such extraordinary steps could be taken in Whitehall.

At the same time that the War Office was developing the commando idea, Churchill was placing demands of his own on the Chiefs of Staff.

On 4 June 1940, as soon as the Dunkirk evacuation was completed, he told the Chiefs of Staff that it was 'of the highest consequence to keep the maximum number of German troops committed along the coast. This would aid the Allied defense of the south of France. He therefore wanted raiding forces, in units of 1,000 men, totalling not less than 10,000 when combined, organized immediately. The Chiefs of Staff hardly had time to consider this when Churchill, on 6 June 1940, sent them another memorandum demanding that proposals be framed for 'striking companies' to develop a 'reign of terror' along the German occupied coast. Churchill recognized that the first raids would have to be of the 'butcher and bolt' type, but as soon as the forces were organized he was all for an operation such as the temporary occupation of Calais or Boulogne. He also wanted methods devised for landing tanks onto beaches, the establishment of a parachute force of 5,000 men, and the organization of an intelligence and sabotage network along the coast. In short, Churchill looked to the Chiefs of Staff for measures to pursue 'a vigorous, enterprising, and ceaseless offensive against the whole German occupied coastline'.⁴

It must have been with this idea of offensive operations in mind that Churchill had approved the establishment of the commandos. Churchill, in his history of the war, quotes with pride the two memoranda cited above. The idea was just the sort that would appeal to him, and he was to take a very personal interest in the development of the commandos. It is obvious in retrospect, however, that Churchill from the start envisaged operations on a far greater scale than the War Office had in mind when setting up MO 9. The material and personnel to carry out these large operations would not in fact be available for

some time to come, but Churchill was determined to pursue them, and was irritated by what he saw as a lethargic response from the service ministries. He would not be put off by the proposals for a policy of small raids gradually leading up to the operations large enough to have a major impact. He was apparently opposed to small raids in principle, once declaring it 'unworthy of such a large entity as the British Empire to send over a few cut-throats'.⁵ Churchill's attention, during June and July 1940, was however focused on issues of greater concern, and this difference in attitudes was not fully appreciated. The raiding organization, whose very existence was in good part due to Churchill, thus expended a great deal of effort in developing a policy which would never be accepted by him.

Churchill's demands on 4 and 6 June were referred by the Chiefs of Staff to the Joint Planning Sub-Committee for Study. The committee, later termed the Joint Planning Staff, was composed of the Directors of Plans of each of the service departments. They replied immediately on 6 June 1940, drawing a sharp distinction between unconventional guerrilla and conventional raiding operations. They thought that the scope for unconventional operations had been greatly expanded by the German occupation of the Atlantic coast, and would be even further extended if Italy entered the war. These operations would be conducted by either MI(R) or MO 9. The division of responsibility between these two sections was rather vague, as this was a dynamic period in their development and relationships shifted frequently. The Directors of Plans were far less sanguine about the potential for conventional raiding operations against the Continent, though they did admit that, with the information gained from the unconventional operations and the

espionage system, opportunities for such raids might arise at a later date. It would therefore be wise to have forces suitably organized, equipped, and trained for raiding already in hand. In regard to the command arrangements necessary for conventional raids, the Directors of Plans thought that the normal service planning channels were adequate.⁶

Air Chief Marshal Sir Cyril Newall, the Chief of the Air Staff and chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, saw Churchill about his demands on 9 June 1940, and the Chiefs of Staff reviewed the situation on 11 June 1940. They accepted the distinction made by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee between conventional and unconventional operations, but felt that, if the planning and conduct of offensive operations against the Continent were to be carried out 'with efficiency and despatch', a singular and separate organization should be formed to direct them. This organization, under the Chiefs of Staff, would coordinate all offensive operations, conventional and unconventional, in a theater of operations consisting of the occupied coast of Northwest Europe. It would be headed by a Commander, Offensive Operations, who would be provided with a small inter-service staff. He would receive instructions from the Chiefs of Staff, with matters of policy being referred to Churchill in his capacity of Minister of Defence. Subject to this, the Commander, Offensive Operations should be given a free hand to prepare offensive plans, for which he could use the Royal Marine Brigade and, initially, an army brigade group of specially selected personnel.⁷

There was apparently some difference of opinion among the Chiefs of Staff as to who the Commander, Offensive Operations was to be. On 12 June 1940, the Admiralty candidate, Lieutenant General A. G. B. Bourne, then the Adjutant General Royal Marines, was selected. This

seemed a logical choice, as the Royal Marines were deemed the amphibious specialists. The army candidate, Brigadier J. F. Evetts, was also to be appointed to the new organization, and it seems that Bourne was intended to oversee policy and the general direction of operations while Evetts was to be the actual raiding commander. On 13 June, the Chiefs of Staff directed the Joint Planning Sub-Committee to draft, in consultation with Bourne, a directive for the Commander, Offensive Operations. Among the guidelines laid down by the Chiefs of Staff was the stipulation that the Commander, Offensive Operations was to have control over all operations, conventional and unconventional, along the occupied coast, and was to be kept informed of all unconventional operations considered for other areas. He was to have control of the Inter-Services Training and Development Centre, and would keep in touch with the intelligence staffs of the three service departments. There was a change from the 11 June arrangement, in that he was to plan for the use of an infantry brigade group only. The omission of the Royal Marine Brigade was confirmed as deliberate on 14 June 1940, as this brigade had by then been earmarked for the contingency role in Eire and this was outside the geographical area of Bourne's responsibility. Bourne would, however, receive the parachute troops as part of his forces.⁸

The details of Bourne's organization had to be decided quickly, as the various departments with whom he was to coordinate were already working out their own programs for the raiding forces. The Air Ministry, although it was not fully convinced of the utility of the parachute troops Churchill wanted, approved on 11 June 1940 the establishment of a parachute training center.⁹ The War Office was also proceeding with the establishment of NO 9 and the disbandment of the

independent companies.

Problems would also be encountered in that the War Office was of the strong opinion that Bourne should be, as the Joint Planning Subcommittee had recommended, restricted to the conduct of conventional raiding. Anthony Eden, the Secretary of State for War, wrote to Churchill concerning unconventional operations on 13 June 1940. On the basis of papers originating in MI(R), Eden proposed the creation of a special department within the War Office to control all forms of unconventional warfare, including applicable operations of the Secret Intelligence Service and the forerunner elements of the Special Operations Executive. Major General H. L. Ismay, the head of the military part of the secretariat serving Churchill, wrote a covering note to this, explaining the functions of the Commander, Offensive Operations as foreseen at the time, and suggesting that it would be sufficient for the Inter-Service Planning Board, which was concerned with special intelligence operations, to link Bourne with all the various agencies involved. Eden's suggestion was therefore rejected, although the problem of coordination was to remain a live issue.¹⁰

The Director of Military Operations and Plans, who controlled MO 9, had been one of the main advocates of the distinction between conventional and unconventional operations. Lund wrote the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff about this on 13 June 1940, stressing his view that Bourne should be limited to the conduct of conventional operations up to divisional size. Although Bourne might call upon the unconventional forces to assist in his own operations, Lund thought that the 'organisation, training, and operation of the irregular forces

is much better left in the hands of the MO and MI sections which are now specialising in this subject'.¹¹ These thoughts were seconded by Clarke who, upon hearing that Bourne was to take over unconventional operations, feared that his section

...might well be smothered by the very weight of the organisation which was to be superimposed upon us at a time when the raiding forces themselves still numbered no more than two hundred men and a few odd motor boats...We both (Clarke and Garnons-Williams) felt a little nervous of being jockeyed into a trot before we had really learned to walk.¹²

The draft directive was submitted to the Chiefs of Staff on 15 June 1940. Refuting the Chiefs' opinions, the Joint Planning Sub-Committee, with War Office support, had persisted in the distinction between conventional and unconventional operations. The committee now argued that, as unconventional operations would extend far beyond the enemy coastline, the directing agencies, although liaising closely with Bourne, should remain independent. There would be no duplication of interference, they assured the Chiefs of Staff, and 'on occasions, actual cooperation may even be possible'. This question of the extent of operations was a valid point, and the consequent division of responsibility was finally accepted by the Chiefs of Staff.

The Joint Planning Sub-Committee had also made a further distinction between conventional raiding operations and amphibious operations conducted to seize and hold strategic objectives, such as the contingency operations then planned in Eire or against the Portuguese Atlantic islands. The latter operations were to remain the responsibility of commanders appointed through the normal service channels. Because of the similarities in the material and techniques involved in both types of operations, and because Bourne's control of the Inter-

Services Training and Development Centre would enable him to serve as the authority on amphibious landings, he was given the dual function of 'Commander of Raiding Operations on Coasts in Enemy Occupation and Advisor to the Chiefs of Staff on Combined Operations'. He was now given the short title of Director of Combined Operations, and headed the whole, known as the Directorate of Combined Operations, through the Combined Operations Headquarters. Bourne's role was consequently much more limited than either Churchill or the Chiefs of Staff had originally envisaged, being in effect confined to a type of operation which the Joint Planning Sub-Committee had originally considered infeasible.¹³ These restrictions were nevertheless readily agreed to by Bourne, who wrote on 23 June 1940 that

In general, the activities of this Directorate may usefully be summed up as 'to assist and not to supersede the existing organisations for raiding and for combined operations'.¹⁴

While Bourne's responsibilities were now fairly well defined, the command arrangements were still uncertain. The control of the military forces to be used by Bourne was the most complex issue. MO 9 was to be his War Office contact for all military forces, but, as has been noted, there was a school of thought that MO 9's function should remain the original one of directing the commandos in unconventional operations, which were not part of Bourne's duties. The six remaining independent companies, under MO 9, despite their earlier origins under MI(R), were now considered conventional units under Bourne's operational control for the purpose of raiding. The parachute units would similarly come under Bourne, even though they were intended to come from the commandos. The commandos themselves were originally

raised for unconventional operations, and thus should have remained outside Bourne's scope, but, as their first operations were small conventional raids, which were his responsibility, they were also included in his directive. MO 9 and the commandos were thus apparently responsible to different agencies for different types of operations. The delineation between the two was vague, and initially MI(R) even sent representatives to Bourne's staff meetings. As one section of the War Office commented on 20 June 1940, 'This is getting, as we knew, into a perfectly glorious muddle'.¹⁵

Difficulties were also encountered in regard to the other conventional forces promised Bourne. As had been seen, he was not given operational control of the Royal Marine Brigade, the one unit that had been established specifically for conventional raiding. When the operations against the Portuguese Atlantic islands had been first considered, they were given to the 3rd Division, the only fully equipped regular division in the United Kingdom, to plan. The operations required two of the division's three brigades, and it was then thought that the third brigade of the division would be the one allotted to Bourne for raiding. As the brigades of the division were committed on operations, they would be replaced by other brigades, so that there would always be a division in hand trained for amphibious operations. This scheme being adopted, there was then no need for Evetts to serve as the raiding commander, as the 3rd Division commander could perform this function.¹⁶ By 4 July 1940, however, the entire 3rd Division had been reassigned to the contingency role in Eire, and the Royal Marine Brigade was tasked with the Portuguese Atlantic islands operations. Bourne thus lost both

his raiding commander and the regular brigade, and these were not replaced. The only troops then available to him were the independent companies and the commandos, and in performing the tasks of conventional raiding they would soon lose all connection with the unconventional operations for which they had been raised, equipped, and trained.

When Bourne began to consider possible raids, he realized the need for a central agency to coordinate the military and political aspects of all offensive operations. On 3 July 1940, he therefore suggested that it was both practicable and desirable to appoint a cabinet minister, with a small staff, to perform this function. The minister would tie together the activities of MI(R), MI 9 and MO 9 at the War Office; MI 6 and Section D at the Foreign Office; EH at the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Information; MI 5 at the Home Office; and the Directorate of Combined Operations.¹⁷ Bourne discussed these ideas with the Chiefs of Staff and the service Directors of Intelligence on 8 July 1940. His scheme was not considered totally satisfactory, but all concerned agreed that a comprehensive system for the control of conventional and unconventional operations was needed.¹⁸ This was in fact an affirmation of the validity of the first proposals for a Commander, Offensive Operations, before they were emasculated by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee.

Similar proposals, unknown to Bourne, had been produced by some of the other agencies involved, and on 1 July 1940 the Foreign Secretary had presided over a meeting concerned with the coordination of subversive activities. This was the origin of the Special Operations Executive, which was formally established on 19 July 1940. The creation of this agency, in which the military had not participated, obviated the military

studies on coordination. In an interview in 1942, Bourne mentioned that the Directorate of Combined Operations was originally intended to come under the Special Operations Executive, but that his successor did not like the idea and persuaded Churchill to leave the Directorate an independent agency.¹⁹ As all the records pertinent to the Special Operations Executive are still closed to the public, this cannot be confirmed, but, given the intentions of the parties concerned, it does seem quite probable. The end result of these actions was the definite split between the conventional and unconventional control systems. The anomalous position of MO 9 and the commandos was resolved, and they were closely associated with the Directorate of Combined Operations for conventional raiding. MI(R) went in the opposite direction, and became part of the Special Operations Executive, with all its ties to the Directorate of Combined Operations being severed.

Bourne was provided with three service deputies and a small staff, housed in a few rooms in the Admiralty. His contacts for operations were Clarke in MO 9 at the War Office and Garnons-Williams, termed Assistant Director of the Operations Division (Combined Operations), at the Admiralty. There was no equivalent to these latter officers at the Air Ministry.²⁰ The forces at his disposal included the six remaining independent companies, in the process of being reorganized on a slightly smaller establishment, and the ten commandos, just forming. The first two raids, carried out in June and July 1940, were in reality carried out by ad hoc groups, and none of Bourne's units were considered to be fully operational.

The independent companies were in a relatively more advanced state of readiness than the commandos, and sections of the War Office

other than MO 9 soon began to consider employment for them. A number of the companies, as noted earlier, were assigned to home defense duties. The 3rd Division, when tasked with seizing the Azores and Cape Verdes, had considered using two of them, and two were also initially included in plans for the expedition against Dakar. The Governors and Commanders-in-Chief of both Malta and Gibraltar had been asked if they could use such units, albeit without their raiding craft.²² Gibraltar thought them a valuable reinforcement, and on 25 July 1940 No. 10 Independent Company was alerted for overseas movement.²³ This company was mobilized accordingly, but was diverted to the Dakar expedition.²⁴ Although Malta thought there was a good potential for raiding, the lack of equipment, together with the difficulty of passing the unit through the Mediterranean, prevented anything being done in this area.²⁵ The danger of invasion of the United Kingdom had also strengthened the arguments of those in the War Office who were opposed to the diversion of troops and material overseas.²⁶ Possible operations in Eire, however, did receive some priority, and the Chiefs of Staff decided on 9 August 1940 that one company should train and be held ready in an air-portable role for dispatch there.²⁷

Bourne requested that the number of companies be brought back up to ten, totalling 2,000 men. Proposals were put forward for raising two companies from Norwegian volunteers, and further companies from French and Belgian volunteers, as they would be particularly valuable for operations in their home countries. There were apparently some difficulties encountered, for the foreign units were not formed until much later, as No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando. No. 11 Commando was then being organized for Operation COLLAR, the first raid, and Bourne

endorsed Clarke's plan for the formation of ten such commandos. Bourne has commented that he personally disliked the loose commando organization, and thought the independent company one to be better. It is therefore surprising that he asked the War Office for a larger commando group, of 5,000 men. The parachutists were originally to come from the commandos, however, and this may have been a factor in the decision.²⁸

The commando concept was being changed even as the first steps were taken in organizing them, primarily because of their exclusion from the Special Operations Executive and their subordination to the Combined Operations Headquarters. Although they retained their rather unorthodox administrative arrangements, their organization gradually became more formalized. The Commando Training Instruction Number 1, issued on 15 August 1940, and the Independent Company Training Instruction Number 1, issued on 20 August 1940, were remarkably similar in concept, and some paragraphs in the two sets of instructions were identical. The major difference at that time was that the independent companies were seen to be capable of combining into a larger force or of working with regular units, whereas the commandos were normally seen working as single units in a pure raiding role.²⁹ This was not, however, sufficient a distinction to justify the existence of two separate organizations, each based on completely different administrative arrangements, and efforts were soon made to amalgamate them.

Bourne's most urgent requirements concerned assault shipping and craft. The landing craft just starting to come off the production line were needed by the Royal Marine Brigade, and a search was therefore made for a suitable alternative. The decision was eventually made to order 136 Eureka craft built by Higgins in the United States. Higgins had

built this boat as a commercial proposition, and had some ready for immediate delivery. These boats, designated R-Craft, were not ideal. They carried no armor, and would not hold more than 25 men, a figure not matching any unit organization. The troops had to jump over the bows upon landing, rather than use a ramp. Still, they could do twelve knots fully loaded, could get on and off a beach with ease, and were 'magnificent sea boats'.³⁰ The first raids across the Channel, however, soon indicated that for any but the shortest distance raids, carrier ships were needed to take the R-Craft across the Channel and return them before daylight. Five Belgian cross-Channel packets were therefore commandeered, and were converted into Landing Ships Infantry (Small). The conversion process would require some time, however, and they would not start coming into service until the end of 1940.³¹

The initial plans for the raiding organization to be controlled by the Combined Operations Headquarters were rather extensive. Four raiding bases were to be established, at Warsash, Northney, Dartmouth, and Brightlingsea. The first three would be training and operational bases, while the last would be solely an operational base. Each base would have two flotillas, each of six R-Craft. Raids would be conducted along the enemy coast within range of these bases by elements of the commandos and independent companies detailed to them. Targets outside of the range of the R-Craft would be attacked by the raiding squadron of the five Landing Ships Infantry (Small), which would use Milford Haven, Lamlash, and Loch Strangford as training and operational bases. All operations were to be coordinated through Clarke and Garnons-Williams. Garnons-Williams was also responsible for directing the training at the raiding force bases, and for representing their needs

to the Admiralty.³² This plan was never to come to fruition, however, The conversion of the Belgian ships took time, and the deliveries of the R-Craft were slower than anticipated. Before the material became available, the whole premise on which the raiding organization was based was to be challenged.

Clarke and Garnons-Williams also began to encounter other problems within their respective service ministries. As Clarke later wrote

...from the date of General Bourne's appointment a subtle change crept into our relations with the War Office and the Admiralty. We did not detect it straight away, but gradually found fair weather giving place to squalls, and before long the troubles were starting. With the appearance of a Lieutenant General at the head of an embryo 'Combined Operations Headquarters', the whole character of raiding began to change before it had even started. The Service Ministries saw their grip being loosened, for it was ceasing to be an affair of enthusiastic amateurs to whom they had been ready to give every encouragement and help so long as they remained under their own control. Now control was passing to a brand new agency which was answerable only to the three Chiefs of Staff and the Prime Minister, an agency which had never been tested and of which conservative Whitehall was frankly sceptical. The War Office viewed the prospect of some five thousand soldiers in the new commandos being removed bodily from its hand at a moment when every man might be needed for the defence of England; while the Admiralty felt much the same in regard to the small craft and their crews. It was perhaps only human nature if their staffs began to lose a good deal of the enthusiasm for the new venture as a consequence.³³

These problems arose even though Bourne stressed that the Combined Operations Headquarters was to act in support of the service machinery. They were to be increasingly magnified as his successor pursued a policy of confrontation with the service departments.

Bourne, on being appointed Director of Combined Operations, had accepted MO 9's plan for Operation COLLAR, the raid on the French coast at Le Touquet, with the ultimate object of penetrating to the Berck airfield. The raid was conducted on the night of 24/25 June 1940. The six crash boats used could take only 30 men each, and, of the six, two

had to be left behind owing to engine trouble. The raid was thus limited to 120 men. Worse than that, the boats came from three different ports, and the appointed rendezvous was missed. Besides cutting the time on shore to a third of that planned, this failure to link up forced the boats to go in singly. Two of the parties had minor skirmishes with the Germans and withdrew, leaving behind two German bodies and bringing back one friendly wounded--Clarke himself. Some useful lessons had been learned, but the raid could not really be described as a success.³⁴

This raid produced a greater stir on the British side than it did on the German. Bourne had been convinced that most of the information leaks in World War I had come from 'those in high places', and so he did not provide details of the raid in advance to the War Cabinet. To make matters worse, he issued, after the raid, a communique on his own authority, which to his mind 'gave the public a good kick when they badly needed it'. The War Cabinet was not pleased to hear of the raid from the press, and decided that no further publicity would be given to Bourne's operations. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff started to make inquiries as to who was responsible for the release of information, and Bourne later noted that there was talk of a court-martial. Eden apparently took a more lenient view, and Bourne 'got away with it'. Nevertheless, this was the only time that such a raid was conducted without the explicit approval of at least the Defence Committee (Operations) or the Chiefs of Staff. As the only means of offensive land warfare on the Continent, raids conducted by mere handfuls of men were thus elevated to the level of the highest councils of war. The ban on publicity, arrived at seemingly without much discussion, at the same

time invalidated one of the major arguments for continuing such small raids, that of their effect on British morale. This policy would continue through mid-1941, with the exception of the March 1941 raid on the Lofoten Islands in Norway. Even then, the commandos who took part in it were not identified as such.³⁵

Bourne was aware that Churchill disliked small raids, but with the assets available, Bourne thought they would be the only type of offensive operations feasible for some time to come. On 10 July 1940, Bourne therefore wrote a memorandum outlining a policy for such raids. He stressed that all offensive operations should be related to the plan by which the war was ultimately to be won, and so, in the absence of any clear instructions, he had set the Combined Operations Headquarters' goals as destroying the enemy's resources, forcing the enemy to expend his assets, and making the enemy's life 'as hard and as uncertain as possible'. The sooner these were achieved, the sooner would victory be possible, and he consequently planned to conduct small raids as soon as the weather conditions and the limited manpower and material available would permit.

Bourne realized that this policy might be criticized as merely a series of 'pinpricks', but he was confident that

...these pinpricks very materially assist us in the general policy ...and will not in any way prevent us carrying out larger and more impressive raids when the means are forthcoming...These more spectacular raids will be coming in due course, but they will only differ from the smaller raids in that they will tend to make the enemy expend still more guns instead of butter, and cause more enemy to be harried and made miserable. They will not produce any new effect and therefore my contention is that the sooner we start the process the sooner the war will end.

I submit therefore that my present policy of staging small raids is in conformity with correct war policy, and that these small raids should be permitted to continue until such time

as larger raids could be staged, and later in conjunction with such larger raids.³⁶

Bourne met Churchill for lunch just after he had written the above, but could not dissuade Churchill from his desire to conduct much larger operations. Churchill had earlier been given an outline of the full raiding organization that was to be established, and was apparently unwilling to accept that the forces indicated would not be ready for some period. For Churchill, it must have seemed more a matter of will than resources.³⁷

Bourne's opinions were shared by the War Office, which felt that his actions were 'being hampered very seriously by a lack of drive, due to uncertainty as to whether his raiding policy has the wholehearted support of the Chiefs of Staff'. This, if anything, was an understatement. COLLAR had almost been cancelled at the last minute because of a conflict with a Secret Service operation. The second raid proposed, termed AMBASSADOR, was then being held in suspense pending a decision by Churchill. Two other raids, one on the coast near Cherbourg and one to destroy the beam radio station at Ushant, had been cancelled by the Chiefs of Staff on the grounds that their scope was too small. All else aside, this was having an effect on the morale of the troops, all of whom had volunteered in the prospect of immediate action. The lack of activity was also seen as a cause of the decreasing support given to the Directorate of Combined Operations by some elements in the service departments. The War Office therefore thought that the policy outlined by Bourne should receive 'unqualified approval', and it even suggested that, in order to provide an impetus to operations, he should be freed of the requirement to obtain approval of the Chiefs of Staff concerning the plan for each raid.³⁸

Bourne met the Chiefs of Staff on 12 July 1940 to discuss this policy. The Chiefs of Staff had secured Churchill's assent to AMBASSADOR earlier that day, and consideration of the raiding policy, which certainly conflicted with Churchill's ideas, was postponed pending the outcome of this operation.³⁹ AMBASSADOR had in fact been mounted at Churchill's instigation. He had not liked the abandonment of the Channel Islands, and was frequently to consider projects for recovering them. On hearing that the Germans had landed in the islands, he had commented that a raid to kill or capture the few hundred German troops there would be 'exactly one of the exploits for which the commandos would be suited'. He raised the issue in a War Cabinet meeting on 2 July 1940, and secured agreement that Bourne should conduct a 'cutting out expedition' as soon as possible.⁴⁰ By 9 July 1940, an officer had been sent to Guernsey by submarine for a preliminary reconnaissance, and a plan had been worked out for a raid by about 140 men carried in a destroyer, in order to destroy enemy forces and facilities on the airfield at Guernsey. By 12 July 1940, the results of this reconnaissance had been assessed and, the approval given, AMBASSADOR was scheduled for the night of 14/15 July.

The raiding party actually consisted of 139 personnel from No. 11 Independent Company/Commando and from the newly formed No. 3 Commando, carried in two destroyers. Seven motor boats were to be used to transfer the party ashore, but not all of them arrived at the rendezvous in time. Of the four boats eventually used, only two reached Guernsey, while a third apparently landed on Sark. The planned objective was found to be unoccupied, and no contact was made with the German troops on the island. The worsening sea then made withdrawal difficult, and a few

men who could not swim out to the boats had to be left behind. By any measure, the raid was an abject failure.⁴¹

Despite this setback, the War Office still supported the policy of small raids. On 22 July 1940, Eden sent Churchill a memorandum giving his opinion that offensive operations would have to be conducted in four phases. First, there would be the reconnaissance and experimental stage of very small raids; then a series of constant 'smash and grab' operations conducted along the coast; then a phase when large amphibious operations could be conducted against major objectives; and finally the phase when extended operations could be conducted inland. Eden noted that the forces for the second phase were then in the process of formation, and thought it necessary that they be 'blooded' by modest 'mosquito raids'. These would also serve the purposes of reconnaissance, the development of material and technique, and the creation of a good 'moral effect'. One or two raids a week, of not more than 200 men, were forecast. As soon as regular formations could be released from home defense duties and be trained, they could initiate the third phase by tackling objectives too well defended for the raiding forces. As long as the operations were raids, Eden thought the Director of Combined Operations should be responsible, but if they were intended to seize and hold bridgeheads, the normal service machinery would be used. In the final phase, the raiding forces could be used to assist the occupied countries in rebelling against the Germans. This is an interesting point, as it shows that the War Office had not entirely given up the idea of using the independent companies and commandos for unconventional operations. It would also provide a role for them when sea-borne raiding was no longer required.

Eden made a point of explaining that the assistance of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force would be required in finding transport for the raiding forces, as the Army was likely to have, in the first two phases, far more trained troops than could be used.⁴² This was to be the very argument used by the Air Ministry in limiting the number of parachute troops, but the relationship between strength and lift capability does not seem to have been pursued any further by the War Office in regard to the independent companies and commandos. The gradual acceptance of these units as being primarily the responsibility of the Combined Operations Headquarters rather than the War Office possibly prevented this from becoming an issue.

Churchill, however, remained adamant to his opposition to small raids. He had not been in the least impressed by COLLAR and AMBASSADOR, and his reply to Eden's memorandum effectively stopped further raiding on the Continent until late in 1941.

It would be most unwise to disturb the coasts of any of these countries by the kind of silly fiascos which were perpetrated at Boulogne and Guernsey. The idea of working all these coasts up against us by pin-prick raids and fulsome communiques is one to be strictly avoided.⁴³

The consequences of this decision were manifold. Small-scale raiding was barred, and large-scale raiding was not yet feasible. The question now to be faced was what role the forces raised for raiding should have.

The problems caused by the dynamic pressures in planning during the period subsequent to the British withdrawal from the Continent are apparent. The need for some sort of raiding capability was recognized at once by both Churchill and the service ministries, but the demand for immediate action resulted in the differences in concept maintained by the parties involved being glossed over. The raiding forces were at

first subject to organizational conflicts within the service ministries, involving matters of authority, and when a compromise raiding organization was finally agreed to by the services it was based on a policy that had not been accepted by Churchill. The plans for the organization outlined above were thus stillborn. Churchill fostered the growth of the commandos, but had a role in mind for them that was far different from that for which they were first raised. The failure to integrate the raiding forces into an agreed upon comprehensive strategy thus meant that much of the initial effort detailed was wasted. This fundamental fault was not corrected during the following months, and would have further adverse effects on the raiding forces.

ENDNOTES--CHAPTER II

1. Msg WO to Scottish Command 11 Jun 40, WO 193/348.
2. D. Clarke, Seven Assignments, (London 1948), pp. 205-227.
3. H. St. George-Saunders, The Green Beret, (London 1971), pp. 14-22.
4. Sir Winston Churchill, Their Finest Hour, (New York, NY 1962), pp. 207-212. Copies of these notes, dated 3 and 5 Jun 40, are in PREM 3/330/5. The dates given in Churchill's book are 4 and 6 Jun 40, which seem more likely. No explanation for this discrepancy is available.
5. 'Interview with Brig. O. M. Lund' 8 May 42, DEFE 2/609.
6. COS(40) 170th Mtg 6 Jun 40, CAB 79/2 and JP(40) 244 or COS(40) 433 (JP) 'Offensive Operations' 6 Jun 40, CAB 84/14.
7. Annex F to COS(40) 174th Mtg 9 Jun 40 and COS(40) 176th Mtg 11 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.
8. COS(40) 179th Mtg 13 Jun 40, CAB 79/5.
9. 'Development of Parachute Troops--Air Requirements: Conference in Air Ministry 10 June 1940' and DP to ACAS(T) 11 Jun 40, AIR 2/7239.
10. Ismay to Churchill 14 Jun 40, PREM 3/330/9.
11. DMO&P to VCIGS 13 Jun 40, WO 193/384.
12. Clarke, p. 216.
13. JP(40) 244 or COS(40) 467 (JP) 'Directive to General Bourne' 15 Jun 40, CAB 84/15.
14. 'Memorandum by DCO' 23 Jun 40, DEFE 2/698.
15. GSD to CSS 20 Jun 40, WO 193/378.
16. Memorandum by CIGS 18 Jun 40, WO 193/384.
17. COS(40) 523 'Offensive and Irregular Operations' 3 Jul 40, CAB 80/14.
18. WO Brief on COS(40) 523 8 Jul 40, WO 193/378 and COS(40) 212th Mtg 8 Jul 40, CAB 79/5. For origins of SOE see Foot, pp. 6-9.
19. 'Interview with General Sir A. G. B. Bourne KCB DSO MVO' 4 Aug 42, DEFE 2/699.
20. References to the initial organization are found in DP to VCAS 13 Jun 40, Slessor Papers VIIID; COS(40) 470 'Memorandum by Lt. Gen.

Bourne' 18 Jun 40, CAB 80/13; COS(40) 187th Mtg 20 Jun 40, CAB 79/5; JP(40) 7 'Instructions to General Bourne' 21 Jun 40, CAB 84/93; and 'Memorandum by DCO' 23 Jun 40, DEFE 2/698.

21. See COS(40) 287th Mtg 30 Aug 40 and COS(40) 290th Mtg 2 Sep 40, CAB 79/6, and WM(40) 240th Mtg 3 Sep 40, CAB 65/9. The independent companies had apparently been used for home defense for some time.
22. 'Outline Organisation for Operation No. 1' 23 Jun 40, WO 106/2933 and WO to Governors and C-in-Cs Gibraltar and Malta 2350/18 Jul 40, WO 193/384.
23. WO to GOC Scottish Command 1310/25 Jul 40, WO 193/384.
24. After the failure of the Dakar expedition, the force involved sailed to Gibraltar, and it is likely that No. 10 Independent Company became part of the Gibraltar garrison thereafter.
25. Note to MO 9 27 Jul 40, WO 193/384 and COS(40) 648 (Draft) 'Operation MENACE' 21 Aug 40, CAB 80/16.
26. Note to DMO&P 23 Jul 40, WO 193/384.
27. COS(40) 256th Mtg 9 Aug 40, CAB 79/6.
28. COS(40) 470 'Memorandum by Lt. Gen. Bourne' 18 Jun 40, CAB 80/13 and 'Interview with General Sir A. G. B. Bourne KCB DSO MVO' 4 Aug 42, DEFE 2/699.
29. 'Commando Training Instruction No. 1' 15 Aug 40, WO 53/1668 and 'Independent Company Training Instruction No. 1' 20 Aug 40, WO 33/1669.
30. Details in these are in Maund, p. 67; B. Fergusson, The Watery Maze, (New York, NY 1961), pp. 56-57; and J. D. Ladd, Assault From the Sea, (London 1976), pp. 24-28.
31. Three of these, the Prince Albert, Prince Charles, and Prince Leopold, were converted by early 1941. Work on the last two was then postponed to free labor for merchant ship repairs.
32. 'DCO--Organisation of Departments and Bases' Sep 40, DEFE 2/698; 'Notes on the History of HMS Tormentor' undated, DEFE 2/699; and AWHQ, p. 94.
33. Clarke, pp. 217-218.
34. St. George-Saunders, Green Beret, gives a good account of this raid, pp. 18-22, though the date is incorrect. Another account is Buckley, pp. 167-168. The date here is confirmed by the entry in the COHQ War Diary on 24 Jun 40, DEFE 2/1.

35. 'Interview with General Sir A. G. B. Bourne KCB DSO MVO' 4 Aug 40, DEFE 2/699; COS(40) 197th Mtg 27 Jun 40, CAB 79/5; WH(40) 184th Mtg 24 Jun 40 and WM(40) 185th Mtg 28 Jun 40, CAB 65/7; and DMO&P to DMI 24 Jul 40, WO 193/378.
36. COS(40) 544 'Raiding Operations Policy' 10 Jul 40, CAB 80/14.
37. 'Interview with General Sir A. G. B. Bourne KCB DSO MVO' 4 Aug 40, DEFE 2/699.
38. WO Brief on COS(40) 542 (sic) 11 Jul 40, WO 193/384.
39. COS(40) 219th Mtg 12 Jul 40, CAB 79/5.
40. Churchill to Ismay 2 Jul 40, PREM 3/330/9 and WM(40) 191st Mtg 2 Jul 40, CAB 65/8.
41. See St. George-Saunders, Green Beret, pp 23-25 and Buckley, pp. 169-171. These two accounts differ in minor details. P. Young, Storm From the Sea, (London 1959), gives a brief description of both the early raids on pp. 13-15. J. Durnford-Slater, Commando, (London 1953), gives a good first-hand account of the raid. He mentions that it was originally scheduled for 13/13 Jul 40, and the postponement may have been due to the need to secure Churchill's approval. In many respects the most detailed account, particularly of the reconnaissance measures, is C. Cruickshank, The German Occupation of the Channel Islands, (London 1975), pp. 85-90.
42. Eden to Churchill 22 Jul 40, PREM 3/330/9.
43. Churchill to Eden 23 Jul 40, PREM 3/330/9.

CHAPTER III

THE DECLINE OF RAIDING

The month of June 1940 had been a hectic one for Churchill, involved as he was in the attempts to prevent the collapse of France and to counter the Italian entry into the war. Owing to the pressure of events, the Chiefs of Staff had appointed Bourne and issued the directive outlining his responsibilities without first securing Churchill's assent. This irked Churchill, and added to his disappointment at the limited offensive policy then being espoused. During July, attention was focused on the need to prepare the United Kingdom to resist invasion, although some thought was given to possible offensive operations overseas. Churchill now had time to review the progress of the raiding organization, and it was apparent that he was not pleased with the direction in which it was proceeding. On 17 July 1940, he consequently decided to replace Bourne with his old friend Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, justifying this to the Chiefs of Staff by citing the 'larger scope' to be given to offensive operations in the future.¹

Keyes had been the leader of the Zeebrugge raid in 1918, and had been retired in 1918. He was 67 years old, but was a pugnacious individual with a driving ego, confident of his ability to lead men in battle. Since the start of the war, he had been seeking some form of active employment, and in many ways this appointment as Director of Combined Operations seemed natural to him. He shared Churchill's ideas of large-scale offensive operations, as well as his impatience with the

ponderous service machinery in Whitehall. He was, as Lund noted, 'Zeebrugge minded'.²

The immediate question raised by Keyes' appointment was, therefore, what type of operations the Combined Operations Headquarters was to conduct. The War Office still supported Bourne's policy of small raids which would gradually increase in size and frequency. Churchill's concept of unconventional warfare, however, was that of the subversion and sabotage being carried out by the Ministry of Economic Warfare and the Special Operations Executive. He did not consider these activities to be military operations in the accepted sense of the term, and wanted the Combined Operations Headquarters to concern itself with military operations on a larger scale. Proposals for small raids would continue to arise, but the emphasis had clearly shifted, or, in Churchill's view, reverted to that originally intended. Keyes was at first in full agreement with the policy of large raids, which was never to be formally codified, but he soon came to realize its impracticability. He was later to complain of Churchill's prohibition of small raids, as this ban in effect blocked any chance for the employment of his forces except in areas outside of his geographical jurisdiction.

Soon after his appointment, Keyes was directly tasked by Churchill to plan raids of 5,000 to 10,000 men, two or three of which might be conducted along the French coast during the winter, after the danger of an invasion of the United Kingdom had passed. On 25 July 1940, Churchill, again bypassing the Chiefs of Staff, asked Keyes for a detailed list of the men, material, and establishments under his command, along with proposals for three or four medium-sized raids for September or October.³ This list, which gave a much more realistic idea of what was then

possible, was submitted on 27 July 1940. No assault shipping was as yet available and, besides the 15 landing craft then earmarked for an operation against Dakar, only 5 new craft were operational.⁴ Only 500 men from the commandos and 750 men from the independent companies were ready for operations, and the parachute troops had not yet been formed.

The Joint Planning Sub-Committee, now renamed the Joint Planning Staff, had been independently examining raiding possibilities. It was clear to the committee that large raids of the type envisaged by Churchill in his notes to Keyes were some way into the future, and they once again recommended a policy of small raids. This recommendation was supported by a number of factors. The organization of the units under Keyes was not seen to be such that these units could mount large-scale operations independently. There were not sufficient landing craft available, and there was a lack of regular forces to exploit any successful landing that might be achieved. Another important consideration was the morale problem likely to be encountered in Keyes' units if they were not soon used in the role for which their personnel had volunteered.⁵

By 8 August 1940, Keyes himself proposed to carry out small raids of 200 to 300 men whenever suitable objectives could be found. The larger raids desired by Churchill, of up to a brigade group, would be undertaken by the regular brigade promised in Bourne's original objective, whenever the brigade was made available and properly trained.⁶ This latter proposal, as could be expected, received the support of the War Office, but the Chiefs of Staff on 9 August 1940 simply 'took note' of it. Their failure to give this policy a positive endorsement avoided a certain clash with Churchill, but the resulting lack of definition

did not make the planning for subsequent raids very easy.⁷

There was still some resistance in the service departments to Keyes' role in the planning and conduct of large-scale raids. This resistance, combined with the realization that the means for such raids were not immediately available, caused Churchill to reduce implicitly his expectations when attempting to delineate raiding responsibilities. By September 1940, Keyes had been assigned responsibility for raids of up to 5,000 men or less, leaving the larger operations in the hands of the normal service planning organization. The regular brigade promised to Bourne was never assigned, presumably on the grounds that Keyes' units, when up to strength, were more than adequate for the task then assigned to him. Combined with the geographic restrictions on his authority and Churchill's ban on small raids, the Combined Operations Headquarters was effectively condemned to a long period of inactivity.

This situation naturally proved intolerable to Keyes and contradicted the very reason for the Combined Operations Headquarters' existence. Keyes therefore started to look further afield for action, his justification for this being that his directive gave him command of operations to be conducted by the independent companies and commandos. It was by no means clear that the restrictions as to size, type, and location, which governed his use of regular troops, were applicable in the case of these special units. Keyes maintained that they were not, and Churchill gave this view both implicit support, in some tentative decisions on the operations planned against Dakar and the Portuguese Atlantic islands, and explicit support, in the command and control arrangements for an operation planned against Pantelleria in the Mediterranean. The Chiefs of Staff, in particular Admiral of the Fleet

Sir A. Dudley Pound, the Chief of Naval Staff, and the Joint Planning Staff naturally enough did not share this view, and the definition of the operational responsibility in such cases was to be a continual source of dispute with the Director of Combined Operations. The net result of these planned operations, for the commandos and independent companies, was the loss of the raiding orientation and the assumption of many of the characteristics of amphibious assault troops, in the style of the Royal Marines.

Keyes, shortly after taking over the Directorate of Combined Operations, had expressed his approval of the approximate size of the raiding units but, as Bourne, could see 'no real necessity to have two separate organisations'. He did not much care what the organization eventually chosen was called, as long as all the units were on a uniform basis.⁸ The Chiefs of Staff agreed to this on 9 August 1940, and invited the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to arrange, in consultation with the Directorate of Combined Operations, for the amalgamation of the two type units.⁹ From the start, this reorganization was seen by the War Office as the opportunity to bring the commandos on to the more orthodox establishment of the independent companies. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff in particular, though he had originally approved the idea, disliked the unorthodox character the commandos had developed.¹⁰

The problem of reorganization now became bound up with that of raiding policy. With the ending of the small raids, the necessity of having any special troops at all was soon questioned. The Joint Planning Staff did not consider these units suitable for large-scale operations, and, after the bar on small operations, the independent companies were almost sent back to the territorial divisions which had formed them.¹¹

The recruiting of the commandos was affected, and at one time was stopped outright. This recruiting from regular units had never, in any case, been popular with the regular commanders, who suffered the loss of valuable trained soldiers, many of whom were looked upon as potential leaders. Complaints on this score, supported by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, had already been forwarded to the Army Council.¹²

All these factors produced a feeling of uncertainty about the future of the raiding forces. Keyes had measured the potential for offensive operations, however, and it was clear that if he was going to conduct any offensive operations at all, they would be carried out by the only troops he could control, the forces under MO 9. Another vital source of support for the raiding forces was Churchill, who had originally pressed the idea and who took a personal interest in their development. He saw the German successes in France as being due to the use of specialized 'storm troops', and considered that this idea should be adopted by the British army.¹³ Any campaign that the British could conduct through 1941 would have to be amphibious in character, and special troops, he thought, would plan an important role in seizing the positions which would be expanded by the field army. Opportunities for minor operations would also almost certainly arise. Churchill therefore demanded at least 10,000 men organized into these small 'bands of brothers' as well as 5,000 parachute troops.

This use of special troops for the initial assault in amphibious operations was fully in accordance with the doctrine developed by the British in the inter-war years and was one of the roles for which the Royal Marines were formed. Such employment was also consistent with Churchill's continual demand for large-scale operations. His support

for the commandos and independent companies, therefore, was for their use in a role other than that for which they had been raised by the War Office. This intention, however, was not readily apparent to many in Whitehall and was to lead to a number of difficulties in the development of the special forces. Eden, for example, when pressed by Churchill about problems that the commandos and independent companies were having, maintained that the War Office had 'no intention of trying to reverse previous policy nor to curtail the activities of these independent units' and promised Churchill that he would meet all of Keyes' requirements. He added, however, that he did not want units of the regular Army to be excluded from opportunities for action and thus 'become a dull, dead mass'.¹⁴

Keyes continued pressing the case of the commandos and independent companies, in opposition to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who favored such alternatives as amalgamating the units into companies to be formed into battalions, and perhaps into brigades.¹⁵ The proposal was even made that all the raiding units be turned into Royal Marines. While in retrospect this would certainly have been the most logical course of action, and would have avoided most of the problems that were to occur, it was not deemed acceptable as it would have denied the Army any means of engaging in offensive operations.¹⁶

The final establishment of the special units was thus delayed until some firm decisions on their operational employment were made. A number of conferences to this end were held between the Directorate of Combined Operations and the War Office. As the War Office still held the controlling interest, the decision was reached, after a meeting on 27 August 1940, to reorganize the commandos and independent companies

on the basis of a force of twenty companies each of 250 men, and two parachute companies. The companies would be grouped into fours to form battalions, and the battalions were to be formed into a brigade, under its own commander. The brigade was to be termed the Special Service Brigade, and the troops thereafter referred to as Special Service troops. This name was picked because of the War Office antipathy to the term 'commando' and was, with blithe disregard of the connotations, abbreviated as SS in official documents. The more orthodox administrative arrangements of the independent companies would serve as the model. The companies would therefore receive a regular issue of equipment, rather than using pools. After the current volunteers were processed, recruiting in regular units would stop, and all future replacements would come direct from the initial training centers.¹⁷ As long as it was on its own terms, the War Office would seemingly go some way to meet Keyes' complaint that

The truth of the matter is, the army has raised some irregular troops, but has not equipped them yet, and the War Office never lose an opportunity of expressing their disapproval of 'shock troop' in principle.¹⁸

While these organizational matters were being attended to, a number of operations against the Continent, of varying sizes, were under consideration. Following upon the lessons learned from COLLAR and AMBASSADOR, NO 9 had worked out, at the request of the intelligence organization, what was considered a 'model' raid on some suspicious German works at Cap Gris Nez in France. This raid, termed WHITEFACE, was scheduled for 21 August 1940, but was cancelled at the last moment.¹⁹ These works were in fact the foundations for German long-range guns, and by mid-September they had become enough of a worry for Churchill himself

to suggest a raid upon them. By then, however, neither the troops nor the landing craft were available, and the project was dropped.²⁰ CHURCH, a raid on the nickel facilities at Salmijarvi, Finland, was under study at the time of Keyes' appointment but never proceeded beyond the planning stage.²¹ A similar situation occurred in the case of a raid on the iron ore facilities at Kirkenes, Norway.²² Both of these latter raids had been proposed in furtherance of the economic warfare policy.

The possibility of invasion of the United Kingdom was seen to increase greatly in early September 1940, and this danger both delayed the reorganization of the commandos and independent companies and caused them to be diverted for home defense. An invasion alert was in fact called on 7 September 1940, and upon the alert Keyes agreed to hand over operational control of the raiding forces to the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces.²³ These units were then integrated into the regular home defense scheme, being used in many cases to shore up weak areas. Two commandos and three independent companies, for example, were sent to Dover.²⁴ Keyes was very sensitive to the effect this transfer could have on the troops, and on 11 September 1940 sent all the units a message indicating that it was but a temporary measure.

Do not think for a moment that this means the end of your chances for offensive action...I am confident that you will prove the value of your training which you have started so successfully, should it be your good fortune to come into contact with the enemy...We have in being a magnificent body of men who will be able to do what I ask of them in the near future, which is to carry the war into the enemy's country.²⁵

During this period, despite all his other worries, Churchill closely followed the progress of the special forces. Although he had been assured by Eden of the attention being given to these units by the War Office, he was also apparently receiving direct reports

indicating the state of affairs at the unit level. He wrote testily to Eden on 8 September 1940

Unhappily, nothing has happened so far of which the troops are aware. They do not know that they are not under the sentence of disbandment. All recruiting has been stopped, even though there is a waiting list, and they are not even allowed to call up the men who want to join and have been vetted and approved. Although these companies comprise many of the best and most highly trained of our personnel, they are at present armed only with rifles, which seems a shocking waste should they be thrown into the invasion melee. Perhaps you could explain to me what has happened to prevent your decision from being made effective. In my experience, which is a long one, of service departments there is always a danger that anything contrary to service prejudices will be obstructed and delayed by officers of the second grade in the machine. The way to deal with this, is to make signal examples of one or two. When this becomes known you get better services afterwards.²⁶

Eden then reassured Churchill that, during the invasion emergency, the units would be brought up to their full war scales of equipment, and personnel selected would be allowed to join the units.

Churchill, characteristically, did not let the matter drop. His source of information must have been Keyes, who was not content with the War Office response. On 21 September 1940, Churchill therefore asked Eden for a breakdown, which was to be updated weekly, of the equipment status of the commandos. 'The position is now bad, and far different from what you were led to believe', he added.²⁷ Eden immediately submitted a breakdown, which Churchill referred to Keyes. Keyes claimed that the material indicated had not yet 'materialised in any way', and Churchill, as a test case, had one commando checked. He found the facts to be other than those given in the 'misleading report'. Eden was once more sent a critical note.²⁸ 'I am rather sorry to be insistent on these small points', Churchill said, 'but they have an alarming aspect'.²⁹ The War Office lamely explained that the false impression

given was due to the accounting methods used. The articles indicated had been released for the units' use, but were still to be delivered 'within existing priorities'.³⁰ Churchill had spurred the War Office into action, however, and by 2 October 1940 all the material was en route to the units. Churchill, when apprised of this by Eden, again went directly to Keyes for confirmation.

Keyes found that deficiencies still existed, and wrote to Eden directly. He was also unhappy that nothing had as yet been done to reorganize the special forces, and he was thus still faced with the problem of employing two units raised on different systems. Keyes mentioned that Churchill was still pressing him on the issue, but the fact was that there was still a shortage of men and material, and Keyes could not

...honestly say that the War Office are carrying out the wishes of the CIGS and yourself as expressed to me. The truth of the matter is that these irregular units are very unpopular in certain quarters of the War Office. But, as you know, the PM is determined that 5,000 shall be specially trained and available for raiding operations under my direction. Two and a half months have passed since I was given the responsibilities of my directive. I am sure that you will agree that further delay in bringing the irregular forces to a state of readiness will be unacceptable to the PM.³¹

As a result of this pressure from Keyes, General R. H. Haining, the Vice Chief of the General Staff, was sent to talk to him, and the situation started to improve.

The outline of the reorganization of the special forces on 27 August 1940 had been guided by General L. Carr, the Assistant Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who was a 'die hard opponent' of the commando organization. Keyes, who had originally leaned towards the independent company organization himself, had agreed to the new scheme, telling Eden 'I am naturally interested in the new organisation although I do not

want to interfere in any way'.³² A meeting of the commando leaders was held in the War Office on 10 September 1940 to discuss the reorganization. The Director of Military Operations and Plans, Major General R. H. Dewing, hoped to use this contact with the commando leaders to influence Carr in their favor. At the meeting, the commando leaders unanimously declared their belief that the administrative system of the commandos did more than anything else to instill self reliance and initiative, that it left the men free to devote their whole time to training, that it eliminated minor complaints, and that it was so popular that the men feared, most of all, the punishment of being returned to their parent units.³³

Keyes had come to believe that there might be many good points in the commando system that could be incorporated into the new brigade. He had not yet had an opportunity to see the commandos for himself, and, since 'the commando is likely to pass without trial in action', he thought it might be advisable to visit them in company with a senior member of the General Staff before the reorganization started.³⁴ Dill, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, agreed to this on 10 September 1940, commenting to Keyes that

I am so glad you agree with the recommendation of General Carr's meeting on the subject of the reorganisation of the irregular forces...We all appreciate the personal interest you are taking in the raising of these units.³⁵

Keyes and Carr accordingly visited a number of the commando units. On 17 September 1940, Keyes then wrote to Dill that he 'was very struck by the officers and men, by their state of training, and by the extraordinary esprit de Commando which exists'. All of the men they had spoken to on the visits were very keen, 'itching to get into action',

and extremely proud of the individual commandos to which they belonged. Keyes felt, and he thought that Carr had agreed, 'that there is a good deal to say for the organisation and mode of living of these commandos'.³⁶ He continued to press this point against a rather unwilling War Office. Some minor irregularities unfortunately occurred while the commandos were under the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces, but Keyes discounted these. He wrote again to Eden on 1 October 1940, explaining that the officers and men had volunteered for hazardous operations under condition which gave them, at small cost to the state, privileges which they valued highly. To take these away from them for minor infractions or administrative inconvenience would be 'straining the point' and would be 'regarded as a breach of faith'. Eden gave in, though retaining the right to reconsider the arrangements at a later date, and thus the unorthodox commando administration remained one of the cornerstones of the system.³⁷

Despite the fact that the special forces were being used for home defense duties, planning continued on their use in offensive operations. The proposal that received the most attention during this period was one initiated by Churchill as a successor to AMBASSADOR. This operation, termed TOMATO, was another product of Churchill's dislike of the German occupation of the Channel islands. He consequently instructed Keyes verbally at the beginning of September 1940 to prepare a plan to capture the islands and hold them for a period.³⁸ Keyes, upon reflection, thought that it might be possible to hold them permanently. This appealed to Churchill, and planning along these lines was quickly started. Besides the fact that this idea was contrary to the view of the Chiefs of Staff that holding the islands was strategically unsound,

there was the difficulty that the operation could no longer be classified as a raid. These problems were never fully brought out, however, as almost all the planning was carried out by Churchill and Keyes directly.³⁹

Keyes had agents placed in both Jersey and Guernsey, and requested that the Admiralty provide crews for seven cross-Channel steamers. As nearly all the available landing craft were off on the Dakar expedition, a search had to be made throughout the country for 'salmon cobbles', shallow draft motor boats capable of carrying about 20 to 25 men. Throughout these preparations, Keyes reported directly to Churchill, the Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Planning Staff being left rather in the dark.⁴⁰ The outline plan for TOMATO was ready by 15 September 1940, with a target date for the operation of 28 September to 5 October, but the project was postponed indefinitely by Churchill on 21 September 1940 owing to the lack of the artillery required to hold the islands for any period.⁴¹

Besides the requests from the intelligence services, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and Churchill himself, other raids were suggested through the normal service planning channels. Throughout this period, it was obvious that Bourne's earlier complaint about the lack of a comprehensive system for selecting and evaluating targets remained valid.⁴² The Chiefs of Staff, at the urging of the Joint Planning Staff, asked Keyes on 19 September 1940 to consider possible ways and means of obtaining information on the nature and equipment of the barges collected in the French Channel ports.⁴³ The Combined Operations Headquarters itself suggested a number of operations, including a raid on Tobruk on 11 October 1940, a raid on the German U-boat and destroyer bases in France, termed MORSE, on 12 November 1940, and raids on other

points on the French coast, termed RANSACK, on 10 December 1940. On 22 November 1940, Keyes had submitted a proposal to the Chiefs of Staff for a raid on the French coast by Moroccan troops. The Chiefs of Staff passed it on to Churchill, noting that his policy had been against pinpricks. Churchill summarily disposed of it.

I think that it would be most undesirable for it to appear that the only people who dared raid the occupied coasts of France were black troops from Morocco. Moreover I do not think the course of the war will be materially affected by a petty affair of 40 men.⁴⁴

None of the projects mentioned above ever came to fruition, and this inability to mount raids on the Continent caused Keyes to look farther afield for offensive opportunities. He offered to use the commandos for the contingency operations against the Azores, and this plan was agreed to in early October. On 5 October 1940, the warning order was accordingly given to Nos. 3, 4, 7, and 8 Commandos to prepare to move to Inverary in Scotland for embarkation on 15 October for Operation BRISK.⁴⁵

Keyes then asked the War Office for a definite date for the return of the other units to his command, suggesting 10 November 1940 as suitable. The invasion threat could then be considered over for the winter. Before the operational control was handed back to Keyes, these latter units would be reorganized.⁴⁶ The Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff agreed to this, asking Keyes to contact him personally if any assistance was required from the War Office. By this time, the reorganization plans had been altered slightly. Nos. 1 through 9 Independent Companies and Nos. 5, 6, 9, and 11 Commandos were to be formed into three Special Service battalions, each of two companies of 500 men. Two more Special Service battalions would be

formed from the four commandos allocated to BRISK whenever it proved feasible. A Special Service Brigade would be formed to control these units. No. 2 Commando was to remain separate as a parachute unit and was redesignated No. 11 Special Air Service Battalion in November 1940.⁴⁷ No. 12 Commando was to remain as a separate command in Northern Ireland.⁴⁸

The Special Service battalions were basically formed by redesignating each commando as a company, and linking two such companies to form a battalion. Besides being 'totally uncontrollable', with ten troops and a strength of over 1,000 men, the battalions were apparently never happy organizations. In the manner of special forces, the highly individualist and self-selected commandos were not suited for amalgamation.⁴⁹ As far as the control of the units was concerned, Brigadier The O'Donovan had been appointed in late August 1940 as the Inspector General of Irregular Units, but this post was apparently only tentative, and his responsibilities in regard to the commandos were never formalized. When the formation of the Special Service Brigade was decided upon, Keyes urged the early nomination of the commander.⁵⁰ He had met The O'Donovan, and liked him, but the War Office on 9 October 1940 appointed Brigadier J. C. Haydon as the commander. Haydon, who had a Guards background, was selected apparently in order to provide a more 'regular' influence on the brigade. He got along well with Keyes, and proved, in the end, one of the most ardent supporters of the commandos. The formation of the Special Service Brigade might have been thought to satisfy the requirement in the Director of Combined Operations' original directive for an Army brigade, and this subject was not to be further discussed.

As part of the search for offensive operations for the Special

Service troops, occasional attempts were still made to secure approval for raids on the Continent. A raid on the ilmenite mining facilities and hydroelectric plant at Jossing Fjord in Norway was particularly favored and pushed for by its proponents, and it well illustrates the difficulties encountered with the raiding policy during the closing months of 1940. This operation, first termed CASTLE and then MANDIBLE, was initially considered by Bourne in his capacity as Deputy Director of Combined Operations on 21 October 1940. Bourne proposed that the raid be conducted by one independent company, as 'anything less would not be approved by the Prime Minister'. Although the intelligence staff's appreciation was that the effects of the raid would not be far reaching, as Germany had about eleven months' stock of ilmenite in hand, Bourne still considered it a useful operation. It would be a success, something needed at the time; it would hearten the Norwegians, an object particularly favored by the Special Operations Executive; and it might bring back some prisoners.⁵¹

Planning for this operation was delayed for a considerable time by the need for better intelligence, but the information ultimately secured was exceptionally accurate, and even the services of a local pilot had been obtained. The Ministry of Economic Warfare was consulted on 8 November 1940, and the operation was finally scheduled for the third week in January 1941. The outline plan was first considered by the Chiefs of Staff on 27 December 1940. They agreed to the operation in principle, but decided to obtain the concurrence of Vice Admiral J. C. Tovey, the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, before submitting the proposal to Churchill.⁵² The commander appointed for the operation was consequently sent to Scapa Flow, and secured Tovey's approval, even

though he was not fully convinced that the gains to be made warranted the risk of damage to the four destroyers involved. He was also a little put out, justifiably, by the failure to be included in the initial planning.⁵³

Churchill happened to see the message traffic with Tovey on this matter, and told Pound that, as Tovey had not been 'at all forthcoming', it would be best to drop the operation. Churchill himself did 'not wish to disturb the Norwegian coast for a trifle like this'.⁵⁴ Churchill's attitude filtered down through channels quickly, and Brigadier A. Hornby, who replaced Bourne as the Deputy Director of Combined Operations, wrote to the Military Assistant to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff telling him that, while MANDIBLE was generally regarded 'by all' as a sound scheme, it was in danger of being 'torpedoed' by Churchill because he had learned of it without having been officially informed beforehand, a procedure 'anathema to him'. Hornby declared that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had consistently been in favor of small raids, and he therefore hoped that Dill would 'push' this one through. The constant cancellations were having an adverse effect on the morale of the raiding forces. He thought that if MANDIBLE were not allowed to take place, then a definite ruling should be requested from Churchill as to whether it was worthwhile planning any future raids. The Combined Operations Headquarters had spent some considerable time in the past three months planning raids similar to this, and 'none had been allowed to take place'. 'It rather brings one to wonder for what the SS troops were formed'.⁵⁵

On 4 January 1941, the Chiefs of Staff gave MANDIBLE, along with a new proposal for a raid on the Traquino Acqueduct in southern

Italy, termed Project T, a very sympathetic hearing, and decided to submit them formally to Churchill. This was done by means of a short summary since, for security reasons, written plans were kept to a minimum. The Chiefs of Staff supported these two operations, noting that it would be some time before major operations could take place and, in the interim, operations such as MANDIBLE would be valuable training for the troops and staffs.⁵⁶ Churchill refused to consider MANDIBLE. 'I cannot consent to this. It will only disturb the whole Norwegian coast for means and objects which are trivial.'⁵⁷ There was, however, no consequent debate on the raiding policy in general, possibly because Churchill approved Project T, renamed COLOSSUS, shortly thereafter, and attention was focused on the execution of this operation.

The difficulties encountered in securing approval for raiding the Continent had caused the Combined Operations Headquarters, upon the Italian invasion of Greece in October 1940, to turn to the possibility of raiding in the Mediterranean. Keyes suggested that one or two commandos be established initially on Crete for this purpose and eventually wanted to take six commandos, personally, to the Mediterranean for such operations. Consideration of this was to become intertwined with his other proposal for the capture of the island of Pantelleria, off Sicily, termed WORKSHOP, and priority was eventually accorded to this latter operation. The cancellation of WORKSHOP in January 1941 would end and prospect of a centralized raiding organization in the Mediterranean. As early as 13 December 1940, the Chiefs of Staff had accepted a recommendation from the Joint Planning Staff that all responsibility for raids against the Italian mainland would devolve upon the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, while raids conducted in the area controlled by

the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, would come under his direction. The Joint Planning Staff thereupon ceased considering raiding in its planning of the war against Italy.⁵⁸

The approval of WORKSHOP, which involved six commandos, had caused the assembly of all the Special Service troops and the remaining assault shipping at Inverary. The four commandos allotted to BRISK had by this time been formed into two Special Service battalions, though the shipping space ultimately provided had allowed for the use of only three commandos in the operation. The reallocation of shipping between BRISK and WORKSHOP then reduced the BRISK requirement to two commandos, or one Special Service battalion. The two battalions originally detailed to BRISK, Nos. 3 and 4 Special Service Battalions, were further advanced in training than those units recently released from home defense duties. As WORKSHOP was a scheduled operation, as opposed to the contingency nature of BRISK, Keyes secured the approval of the Chiefs of Staff for a transfer of unit responsibilities. On 1 December 1940, No. 5 Special Service Battalion was accordingly allocated to BRISK, and Nos. 3 and 4 Special Service Battalions were transferred to WORKSHOP, to work in conjunction with No. 2 Special Service Battalion.⁵⁹

These three Special Service Battalions, along with the only three Landing Ships Infantry (Large) available, the Gleearn, Glenrov, and Glengyle, were then trained as an amphibious striking force. Although WORKSHOP was cancelled in January 1941, the Commanders-in-Chief Mediterranean and Middle East wanted the assault shipping, though not necessarily the Special Service troops, for amphibious operations of their own. A great debate on amphibious policy broke out. Keyes, despairing of any action, wanted to send the amphibious force out to the

Mediterranean intact, but Churchill was reluctant to lose the Special Service troops, expectant as he was of large-scale operations in north-west Europe. The upshot of this debate was that on 21 January 1941 Churchill authorized the sailing of the assault shipping and their commando complements, less one commando which would be replaced by a locally raised Middle East unit, around the Cape of Good Hope to Egypt. Keyes fought this decision, intent as he now was in using the Special Service units as the basis of an amphibious assault force, but without avail; and on 31 January 1941 the assault shipping and Nos. 7, 8, and 11 Commandos sailed for the Middle East. The commandos were organized into 'Layforce', under the command of Brigadier R. E. Laycock, and were to be used, or misused, as regular infantry during the battle for Crete. A few raiding attempts were to be made, but by the summer of 1941 the units were to be disbanded and the surviving commandos dispersed to other units.⁶⁰

The departure of Nos. 7, 8, and 11 Commandos left 3,500 Special Service troops in the United Kingdom, organized in No. 1 Special Service Battalion, made up of the disbanded independent companies and new recruits and the understrength Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 12 (Irish) Commandos. Churchill wanted this force rebuilt to a strength of 5,000 men as quickly as possible, but as recruiting was no longer allowed in regular units, the replacements had to come from infantry training centers. This meant that the Special Service units would not be operationally effective for some time to come. Another factor limiting their employment was the small lift capability of the assault shipping and craft left in the United Kingdom. Even if all available shipping was used, the striking force created would be no larger than 2,500 men.

There was thus already a fair number of Special Service troops left over for raids across the Channel in R-Craft. Further troops would not be of much use without the transport to carry them, and this would not be ready for some time to come. Keyes therefore told Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff that he would attempt to raise the extra 1,500 troops called for but pointed out that this would create many problems. He would rather concentrate on bringing the present units up to strength than on raising new ones.⁶¹ Churchill referred this suggestion to the Chiefs of Staff on 29 January 1941.

In many respects, the decision to dispatch only three commandos to the Middle East worked to the advantage of the Special Service troops. The reorganization necessary after their departure provided the opportunity to review the Special Service battalion organization. Keyes wrote to Haydon on 30 January 1941 that his experience with the Special Service troops while training with them for WORKSHOP had convinced him of the superiority of the commando organization, and that it had only been with 'considerable reluctance and misgivings' that he had concurred in the battalion organization favored by the War Office. The Special Service battalions were, in his view, not only unnecessary but undesirable as they deprived the commando leaders of the chance to exercise initiative and of the full personal control of the men they had selected and trained. Keyes thought it 'infinitely preferable' that the Special Service Brigade should ultimately be composed of ten commandos of not more than 500 men each, with the smallest possible staffs. These commands would be far less cumbersome than the battalions, and better suited for amphibious operations.⁶²

Haydon agreed with Keyes, and on 3 February 1941 a meeting was held in the Combined Operations Headquarters, with representatives of MO 9 present, to draw up recommendations for submission to the War Office. These recommendations would include the reorganization of the Special Service troops into separate commandos, with six troops each instead of the previous ten.⁶³ A further meeting was held with the War Office on 9 February 1941, during which Haydon presented his case for the new organization. The Special Service battalion had been reported unsuitable in training; it did not fit into any known assault shipping, nor did any of its sub-units fit into the available landing craft; and it detracted from the highly individualist spirit of the commandos. The meeting agreed that the new organization should be adopted, as long as it was understood that this was to be the final form of the Special Service units. Haydon further recommended that the Special Service Brigade should, for the present, consist of eight commandos, as this was the maximum that could fit into the craft available. This organization would require the recruitment of only about 500 extra men, and would not demand any more officers. The question of recruitment, however, was postponed until the Chiefs of Staff had made a ruling on the size of the Special Service force required in the United Kingdom.⁶⁴

The Royal Marine Brigade, used in the Dakar expedition, had afterwards been divided into two brigades for the contingency operations against the Portuguese Atlantic islands.⁶⁵ At the instigation of the Admiralty, the Chiefs of Staff on 9 August 1940 approved the creation of a Royal Marine Division of three brigades of two battalions each, to be used as an assault force for amphibious operations. The third brigade had started forming on 1 October 1940 but, as in the case of the

first four battalions, the force had to be created from scratch. Progress in establishing the brigade was slow during the winter of 1940-41.⁶⁶

The Joint Planning Staff, during the reorganization of the commandos, was working on a study concerning the requirements for the Royal Marine Division. The previous use of the commandos in an amphibious assault force and Keyes' apparent intentions of recreating another such assault force with the commandos remaining in the United Kingdom caused the Joint Planning Staff to widen the scope of its investigation. The Joint Planning Staff decided that the first stage should be the determination of the most profitable employment of the units available for amphibious operations--the Special Servicetroops, the Royal Marines, and the field army--and on 6 February 1941 they presented a report on this subject. In looking at the role of the Special Service troops, the Joint Planning Staff found themselves opposed to Keyes' and Churchill's conception of their role as specialist assault troops for amphibious operations, a role that had been assumed because of the ban on small raids and the Royal Marines' involvement in contingency operations. The Joint Planning Staff now correctly pointed out that the commandos lacked adequate combat support and administrative services, thus limiting seriously the extent to which a successful landing could be exploited. Although for a short time, and at a limited distance, the Special Service troops could provide a greater measure of surprise, mobility on foot, and short-range firepower, they were not as effective as a normal field unit for landing operations in the face of an enemy. It was 'tactically and economically unsound', therefore, 'that these troops should form the spearhead of any big landing operation'. 'Nevertheless, in combined operations, they are

likely to be useful in diversions to the main operation.' The Joint Planning Staff consequently recommended that the Special Service troops concentrate on raiding and unconventional warfare. The assault role in minor operations could be carried out by the Royal Marine Division, while any large operations could be carried out by Army units.

Trained field army troops are fully capable of carrying out operations in the face of the enemy. Further, their organisation and equipment, modified to suit the country, allow them to undertake an advance to some depth beyond the landing beaches.⁶⁷

In view of this far-sighted and comprehensive analysis, the first ever really undertaken, the Joint Planning Staff saw no need for large numbers of commandos. On this basis, the War Office supported Keyes' recommendation that no new Special Service units be formed. This plan would also free some of the assault shipping for training elements of the field army and ease the manpower shortage.⁶⁸ The Chiefs of Staff considered both the Joint Planning Staff report and Keyes' recommendations on 12 February 1941. Curiously, they did not endorse the views of the Joint Planning Staff on the role of the Special Service troops, declaring instead that they were 'irrelevant to the subject and had not been called for'. It is hard to discern the reasons for this abrupt rejection, other than a deference to the vested interests of the parties concerned. A heated controversy was then in progress over Keyes' authority as Director of Combined Operations, and the commandos were, after all, one of Churchill's proteges. In any event, the failure to seize this opportunity to define the relationship and function of the Special Service troops in regard to the other forces available would lead to further difficulties in the development of a raiding party. Further attempts were being made to conduct raids on the Continent, but

by the end of March 1941 the raiding policy was in effect abandoned and the Special Service troops again integrated into amphibious assault force earmarked for the capture of the Canaries islands.

The Chiefs of Staff did accept, however, the proposals concerning the size and organization of the Special Service troops, and this was agreed to by Churchill.⁶⁹ By the end of February 1941, the Special Service battalions were formally disbanded, and the changeover to the new organization was well under way. Although in later years a number of Special Service brigade headquarters were to be established for tactical command and control, and the Royal Marines were to disband their division and convert to the commando configuration, the basic outline of the individual commando units was to remain fundamentally unchanged from February 1941 until the end of the war.

As noted, suggestions for raids continued to be made through early 1941. Despite Churchill's aversion to raiding Norway, as evidenced in his rejection of MANDIBLE, the planners remained interested in this area. Keyes was visited in January 1941 by the chief of the Norwegian naval staff and the Norwegian naval attache, who urged offensive operations along the Norwegian coast under cover of the long nights. The Norwegians wanted to start raiding themselves, with four of their own motor launches, and thought it possible that some Special Service troops might be included. Keyes was inclined to support their proposals but knew it not worthwhile pursuing the matter until approval in principle had been obtained from Churchill.⁷⁰ The Chiefs of Staff, when approached, were attracted to the proposal because of the heartening effect that small raids by Norwegian sailors might have on the Norwegian population. They were 'well aware' that Churchill was

opposed to 'a policy of pin-pricks on the enemy occupied coastline', but thought that this project might not fall into that category. They therefore requested a ruling. On 23 January 1941, Churchill replied 'I do not approve of these operations. They are not to be further contemplated.'⁷¹

A more favorable reception was given to a proposal by Hugh Dalton, head of the Special Operations Executive, for a raid on the fish processing facilities in the Lofoten Islands off Norway. These plants were an important source of vitamins A and D for the Germans, and Dalton thought that any diminution of the supply would 'no doubt' be a serious matter for the German government. The Norwegian government had been consulted, and it accepted that some action of this kind was necessary. This proposal had the advantage that the objective was in the far north, where such an operation would not affect the livelihood of the Norwegian fishermen to any great degree and was unlikely to have an impact on the districts farther south. An attack at this time of year was made easier by the almost perpetual night. The aims proposed by the Special Operations Executive were the destruction of the herring and cod liver oil plants, any transports in the local harbors, and German trawlers fishing in the vicinity; the elimination of the small garrisons in the islands; and the arrest of local quisling officials. Dalton asked Churchill for permission to borrow two assault ships from the Directorate of Combined Operations, and intended to approach the Norwegian government for the men necessary, over and above those available from his own organization. Churchill referred the project to the Chiefs of Staff on 19 January 1941.⁷²

Keyes was aware of this scheme, and although he considered it a 'side show' which could not hit the enemy anywhere as much as

a 'real combined operation', he told the Chiefs of Staff that he was prepared to put up a plan of his own for the operation.⁷³ The Chiefs of Staff liked the scheme as proposed by Dalton but agreed that employing as it did both naval and military forces, it was more suitable for the Director of Combined Operations to carry out, albeit in close cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Warfare and the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet.⁷⁴ Churchill was generally well disposed towards the idea, though he wanted to 'feel sure' that the Chiefs of Staff had carefully considered whether the raid was likely to stir up the Norwegian coast, and thus lead to a German reinforcement of Norway. His main concern, therefore, was that the raiding troops did not go onto the mainland. As long as the attack was on the islands only, it could be connected with the British blockade measures, rather than being seen as a prelude to a larger operation.⁷⁵

On 24 January 1941, the Chiefs of Staff invited the Directorate of Combined Operations and the Special Operations Executive to send representatives to discuss the project with them 'as a matter of urgency'.⁷⁶ On the following day, they gave approval to the outline plan presented by the Combined Operations Headquarters, though the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, had not yet been consulted, and directed the initiation of the necessary planning and preparations.⁷⁷ The Landing Ships Infantry (Medium) Queen Emma and Princess Beatrix, converted Dutch cross-Channel ships just then coming into service, would be used, together with two destroyers as escorts; and the target date was set for 22 February 1941. Churchill gave his final assent to the operation, termed CLAYMORE, on 27 January 1941.⁷⁸

Keyes approached Tovey on 6 February 1941, after further work

on the plan. As the raid was 'obviously a naval occasion', he asked Tovey to appoint 'a stout hearted commander to take command of the operation'. This was the first real raid in northwest Europe to be conducted since his appointment, and Keyes hoped that Tovey would offer to let him command it personally.⁷⁹ By 20 February 1941, the preparations for CLAYMORE, which now included five destroyers, were complete, and on 21 February Keyes explicitly asked the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, if he would like to have Keyes as the commander.⁸⁰ Tovey tactfully replied that he did not think it was necessary, as he had complete confidence in the officer he had chosen to command the operation.

Tovey did not have as high an opinion of CLAYMORE as the planners. The increasing U-boat attacks in the North West Approaches seemed to him to warrant a higher priority than 'eccentric' operations such as CLAYMORE. He had already urged the Admiralty to postpone such operations until the U-boat threat had been countered, as he had only a small destroyer force and was faced with ever-increasing demands. Although he had also considered operations off the Norwegian coast, the shortage of cruisers and destroyers, 'whether one likes it or not', required that careful consideration be given as to whether the object of the operation was worth the risk to the ships. Although the result of a successful CLAYMORE was difficult to estimate, Tovey did not believe it would cause serious damage to the Germans and thought it would be more in the nature of an irritant. It might also result in other complications, including the effect on the Norwegians if their means of livelihood were destroyed and Norwegian lives lost. Tovey assumed that Keyes and his staff had considered all these aspects, however; and as it was apparent that they still thought the object

worthwhile, he would see that the naval side of the operation was carried out as efficiently as possible.⁸¹

Keyes assured Tovey on 25 February 1941 that the Norwegians were providing considerable support for the operation. Although he agreed with Tovey as to the worth of the operation, the Norwegians were sending a keen contingent, and he 'would be sorry on their account' if CLAYMORE were not carried out. Moreover, German surface units might put to sea to oppose the operation, and thus present an opportunity for battle. 'Later on we may be able to work together for the overthrow of the enemy in Norway by doing something much more worthwhile', Keyes concluded.⁸²

Churchill was by now fully behind CLAYMORE. On 23 February 1941, the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, had sent a message to the Admiralty proposing an alternative operation, ALMONER, if CLAYMORE were postponed or cancelled. ALMONER would consist of the seizure of the Norwegian herring fleet by boarding parties of Norwegian seamen and Special Service troops. Churchill saw this message, and noted to Pound, 'but we have to do CLAYMORE which has been long prepared and has teeth in it'.⁸³ Tovey was therefore told that ALMONER was to be dropped and that 'great importance' was attached to CLAYMORE. Until the U-boat situation improved in the North West Approaches, however, Tovey would be kept free from any other special operations.⁸⁴

CLAYMORE was executed on 4 March 1941, without further reference to the Chiefs of Staff, by 250 men each of Nos. 3 and 4 Commandos and parties of Royal Engineers and Norwegians. The two assault ships, with five destroyers as escorts and a submarine as a navigational aid, were used along with a covering force of two battleships, two cruisers,

and five destroyers. Surprise was complete, and the only opposition encountered was from a German armed trawler. There were no casualties on the British side, and 225 prisoners were taken, including 10 quislings. The Norwegians gave the raiding force a warm welcome, and 315 Norwegian volunteers, including 8 women, returned to the United Kingdom with the raiding force.⁸⁵

After the news of the success of CLAYMORE was received, Dalton wasted no time in reminding Churchill that the scheme was originally a Special Operations Executive idea; and he gave Churchill a list of things the organization had done to make 'a substantial direct contribution' to its success. He therefore hoped that, in apportioning credit for the operation, 'due weight' would be given to the part played by the Special Operations Executive.⁸⁶ Churchill asked Ismay about this, and Ismay agreed that, while primary credit must be given to the Directorate of Combined Operations, the Special Operations Executive had made a valuable contribution. Ismay prepared a letter complimenting the Special Operations Executive for Churchill to sign, and Churchill then requested that a similar letter be prepared for Keyes. Upon receipt of this letter, Keyes thoughtfully had copies made and distributed to all the key personnel concerned.⁸⁷

A change in policy regarding publicity was made for CLAYMORE. Whereas previous operations had not been publicized, the Ministry of Information was anxious to cover CLAYMORE. Lessons had been learned from COLOSSUS. Although the Ministry of Information had been confidentially informed of that operation in advance, in order to be able to suppress any news, no arrangements had been made for publicity. When the Italians issued a communique on COLOSSUS and it became necessary

for the British to counter it, the Ministry did not know to whom to turn. The Directorate of Combined Operations 'was not in a position to issue a communique', and, for a combined operation, no single service department could do so unless it had been prearranged with the other two.⁸⁸ The Ministry of Information had consequently suggested that in the future one service department be designated the contact agency for a particular combined operation.⁸⁹

The Chiefs of Staff agreed to this suggestion, although they would keep the advance notice as short as possible. For CLAYMORE, the Admiralty had been selected, as the Royal Navy played the prominent part.⁹⁰ Approval was secured for three press officers to accompany the force. Tovey was not very happy with the arrangement. 'I dislike strongly the Ministry of Information trying to make a Hollywood show out of it, but I presume for some good reason this has been approved by the highest authority'.⁹¹ The raid produced some good publicity, although it would not be until much later that the commandos would be identified and given due credit for their part in the operation. There was still a desire for an active raiding policy, despite Churchill's position, and the Combined Operations Headquarters continued to receive suggestions from outside sources. After the cancellation of WORKSHOP, there were no major projects in hand, and the Combined Operations Headquarters consequently had the time to follow up on some of these ideas. The Joint Planning Staff had proposed M.BARIC, which had its origin in the Admiralty in December 1940. The Director of Plans there, surveying the possibility of invasion in the spring season, decided that at least eight of the enemy's fourteen probable invasion ports would have to be neutralized for an extended period before the enemy's invasion potential

was sufficiently reduced to allow the British naval forces a measure of freedom.⁹² Although bombardment, bombing, and mining might destroy some of the material at these ports and delay enemy preparations, none of these methods could be relied upon to deny the ports 'absolutely' to the Germans. A combined operation involving the use of blockships and the demolition of lockgates was seen as the best course of action. The Joint Planning Staff recommended that, among other measures, detailed plans should be prepared between themselves and the Directorate of Combined Operations and that ships and other material should be readied to launch a number of simultaneous attacks on the invasion ports early in 1941. This was approved by the Chiefs of Staff on 10 January 1941 and forwarded to Keyes. He was not particularly enthusiastic.

I do not consider that the immobilisation of 14 enemy ports, 'or at least 8 of them', is a practicable proposition for a simultaneous naval and military operation, having regard to the ships, landing craft, material and troops available and the scale of opposition to be expected. If the Directors of Plans can suggest some way in which this proposition can be carried out I will be glad to consider it.⁹³

Faced with the practical difficulties, the Joint Planning Staff abandoned this project, suggesting instead that a series of 'information raids' on the French coast might be useful. Discussions with the Directorate of Combined Operations were conducted, and the question of these raids was raised in a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff on 25 February 1941. Much of the preliminary planning for these raids had by then been done, and if approved, they could commence in March. The Joint Planning Staff pointed out, however, that the ban on small raids would have to be lifted. The Chiefs of Staff agreed to submit the scheme to Churchill concurrently with another project being studied, termed ATTABOY, which had been suggested by Churchill himself. In the meanwhile,

the Director of Combined Operations, in conjunction with the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces, would continue planning the raids on the assumption that they would start after 20 March 1941. The Admiralty was asked separately to plan destruction raids on the major invasion ports, involving bombardment, explosive ships, blockships, and mines, to be executed when the danger of invasion appeared imminent.⁹⁴

The other project under consideration at the time, ATTABOY, was yet another foray against the Channel Islands. These were one of Churchill's favorite objectives, and he had suggested this operation on 18 February 1941 as he thought that it was

...most desirable that some offensive action be undertaken to force the Germans to fight and to inflict military losses on them at an early date. If we can inflict greater damage on the enemy than we suffer ourselves as a result of such operations, so much the better, but even if the actual losses on both sides were about the same we would be able to count the moral effect an important gain. The capture or raid on one of the ATTABOY islands would be a suitable objective.⁹⁵

This was a similar argument to the one Churchill had used earlier for TOMATO. The operation was referred to the Joint Planning Staff for study, and their report was ready by 20 February 1941. They considered the capture of one of the islands feasible, even though the strength of the enemy garrisons was unknown and the islands were outside the range of fighter cover. The strategic effect, however, was considered 'negligible'. The object could be, therefore, only to inflict losses upon the enemy and achieve a moral effect. The latter would be possible only if the islands were retained by the British, and this would entail an undesirable commitment in regard to both garrisoning and supply. The enemy reaction would be certain to cause a loss of life among the islands' inhabitants. Finally, as the enemy would retain freedom of

action, no great damage could be forced upon him.

The Joint Planning Staff did not think that a raid upon one of the Channel Islands would thus have much effect and preferred the information raids on the French coast, which carried on the term BARBARIC. These would cause a lot more damage, have a greater moral effect--the objectives set out by Churchill and at the same time provide information on invasion activities.⁹⁶ The Chiefs of Staff on 29 February 1941 therefore decided that they would postpone a decision on both projects until they had a chance to review the plans that Keyes was preparing for ATTABOY.⁹⁷

While the capture and holding of one of the Channel Islands had been investigated by the Joint Planning Staff, the alternative of a raid had been referred to the Director of Combined Operations, under the division of responsibility specified in Keyes' directive. Keyes was not optimistic about a raid in the circumstances given. An operation in which the troops landed and reembarked on the same night would be 'very difficult and hazardous'. In order to provide daylight fighter protection to the shipping on passage, the troops would have no more than four hours on the ground. The capture of British agents in the islands and the recent enemy reactions to ships in the vicinity indicated that surprise would be improbable. The shore defenses were a great hazard and would, for a number of reasons, be difficult to neutralize in the time available. The raiding forces might not be able to withdraw, and would then have to fight it out with the garrison. Keyes thought the raid might have a better chance for success if it were planned to last two nights. Despite his reservations, he was willing to start detailed planning for a raid between 21 and 26 March 1941 if the Chiefs

of Staff decided, under the circumstances, to carry out the operation.⁹⁸

The Chiefs of Staff considered the recommendations of both the Joint Planning Staff and the Directorate of Combined Operations, and on 7 March 1941 informed Churchill that ATTABOY, however carried out, would not serve the purpose that he had in mind.⁹⁹ Churchill was reluctant to abandon ATTABOY, and stated that he was willing to consider a raid lasting two nights. The Royal Air Force should be able to give the raiding force air cover for a single day, and 'this would bring about many further engagements with the Germans, such as are now sought over the Pas de Calais'. Churchill was also averse to the alternative of BARBARIC presented by the Chiefs of Staff. He did not see why the coast of France should be any less well defended than the Channel Islands, and at least the latter could not receive immediate reinforcement in event of a raid.¹⁰⁰ No definite decision between the two was made at this time, however.

Keyes had by now fully prepared BARBARIC, which consisted of a number of R-Craft operating in pairs and escorted by motor torpedo boats, in raids on various ports along the coast to capture prisoners. The raiders would not in any case be ashore for more than two and a half hours, and all the raids would be conducted on one night. Keyes, on 10 March 1941, pressed for a decision, if the raids were to be carried out during the next dark night period.¹⁰¹ The Chiefs of Staff considered the operation at length with Keyes on 11 March 1941 and recommended to Churchill that ATTABOY definitely be cancelled and BARBARIC undertaken.¹⁰² Churchill gave in later that night, and the Channel Islands project was again abandoned.

BARBARIC was reviewed by Churchill on 19 March 1941, just before

its execution. He declared that he had never fully endorsed this type of raiding and that he now had serious doubts about the operation. BARBARIC had been compared to a 'trench raid', but to his mind the simile was not an apt one. Since the raiders would almost certainly find the objectives heavily guarded, a considerable number of the commandos involved would become casualties. He was not convinced that any information that might be gained could not also be obtained by aerial reconnaissance. If the objective was worthwhile, he would favor it, but the capture of a few low-ranking German soldiers 'seemed a very small prize'. The Chiefs of Staff, faced with these objections, admitted that they 'did not have strong views in favour of carrying it out'. Though the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff did see it as a valuable means of training the commandos, and though Keyes supported it, their arguments were not sufficient to overcome Churchill's reservations. While Churchill realized the disappointment that the Special Service troops would suffer, he felt certain that BARBARIC should be cancelled. This was agreed to by the Chiefs of Staff, and the ban on small raids in northwest Europe thus continued in force. 103

In examining the above proposals for raiding the Continent, it can be seen that this type of operation received a steadily declining emphasis from the time of Keyes' appointment until March 1941. The conflict between the idea of large operations as favored by Churchill and small-scale raiding as continually proposed was never really resolved. Churchill's schemes were far too ambitious for the contemporary capability, whereas the smaller raids were objected to by Churchill as being militarily useless and a political liability. A raiding system was thus never developed, and Keyes, impatient for action, began to use

the raiding forces for operations elsewhere. For one reason or another, almost none of these latter operations ever came to fruition, but in the process of preparing for them the commandos began to assume the role of amphibious assault troops. In many respects, the operational planning for the commandos was distinct from the overall strategy pursued by the Chiefs of Staff, and no coordinated examination of their operational role was undertaken. The unilateral Joint Planning Staff effort of March 1941, accurate though it later proved to be, was never seriously considered. In any event, by that time the original justification for the commandos, the raiding of the Continent, was no longer viable.

ENDNOTES--CHAPTER III

1. Churchill to Ismay 17 Jul 40, DEFE 2/698.
2. 'Interview with Brig. O. M. Lund' 8 May 42, DEFE 2/699.
3. Based on Churchill to Eden 23 Jul 40, PREM 3/330/9 and Churchill to Keyes 25 Jul 40, K 140/3/1.
4. For a complete account of the Dakar expedition, see A. Marder, Operation MENACE, (London 1976).
5. JP(4) 76th Mtg 29 Jul 40, CAB 84/2 and COS(40) 588 (JP) 'Raiding Operations' 31 Jul 40, CAB 80/15.
6. COS(40) 612 'Combined Operations' 8 Aug 40, CAB 80/16.
7. COS(40) 256th Mtg 9 Aug 40, CAB 79/6.
8. COS(40) 612 'Combined Operations' 8 Aug 40, CAB 80/16.
9. COS(40) 256th Mtg 9 Aug 40, CAB 79/6.
10. DMO&P to DDMO(H) 26 Aug 40, WO 193/379.
11. COS(40) 588 (JP) 'Raiding Operations' 31 Jul 40, CAB 80/15 and Note to DSD 14 Aug 40, WO 193/384.
12. COS(40) 250th Mtg 6 Aug 40, CAB 79/5 and ACM(AE) 16 12 Aug 40, WO 163/48.
13. Churchill to Eden 25 Aug 40, PREM 3/103/1.
14. Eden to Churchill 26 Aug 40, PREM 3/103/1.
15. Much of the opposition by the CIGS might be ascribed to the fact that the commandos were no longer fully under War Office control.
16. DMO&P to DDMO(H) 26 Aug 40, WO 193/379.
17. Eden to Churchill 8 Sep 40, PREM 3/103/1.
18. Keyes to Ismay 27 Aug 40, K 13/1.
19. 'Small Scale Raids in Europe' undated, DEFE 2/694 (which at times gives incorrect dates) and Clarke, pp. 250-253.
20. COS(40) 315 Mtg 18 Sep 40, CAB 79/6.
21. 'Small Scale Raids in Europe' undated, DEFE 2/694.
22. COS(40) 544 (JP) 'Destruction of Kirdenes Harbour' 17 Jul 40, CAB 80/15 and COS(40) 228 Mtg 17 Jul 40, CAB 79/5.

23. Eden to Churchill 11 Sep 40, PREM 3/103/1 to Eden to Keyes 12 Sep 40, DEFE 2/698.
24. Eden to Churchill undated, Sep 40 with Churchill's note of 18 Sep 40, PREM 3/103/1.
25. Keyes to Commanders of Commandos and Independent Companies 11 Sep 40, DEFE 2/698.
26. Churchill to Eden 8 Sep 40, PREM 3/103/1.
27. Churchill to Eden 21 Sep 40, PREM 3/103/1.
28. Eden to Churchill 21 Sep 40, WO 193/378.
29. Churchill to Eden 30 Sep 40, PREM 3/103/1.
30. Unsigned note of 2 Sep 40, WO 193/378 and Eden to Churchill 3 Oct 40, PREM 3/103/1. For Keyes' confirmation see note on bottom of the latter.
31. Keyes to Eden 7 Oct 40, DEFE 2/698.
32. Keyes to CIGS 9 Sep 40, DEFE 2/698 and Diary of Major General R. H. Dewing 10 Sep 40.
33. Clarke, p. 257.
34. Keyes to CIGS 9 Sep 40, DEFE 2/698.
35. Dill to Keyes 10 Sep 40, DEFE 2/698.
36. Keyes to Dill 17 Sep 40, DEFE 2/698.
37. Keyes to Eden 1 Oct 40 and Eden to Keyes 1 Oct 40, DEFE 2/698.
38. Churchill to Keyes 2 Sep 40, K 140/3/1.
39. As in Keyes to Churchill 6 Sep 40, K 140/3/1.
40. Note on 10 Sep 40, DEFE 2/116 and Keyes to Churchill 11 Sep 40, K 140/3/1.
41. COMQ War Diary 15 Sep 40, DEFE 2/1 and Keyes to Churchill 21 Sep 40, K 140/3/1.
42. COS(40) 533 'Combined Operations' 17 Jul 40, CAB 80/15.
43. COS(40) 316 Mtg 19 Sep 40, CAB 70/6.
44. Ismay to Churchill 22 Nov 40 and Churchill to Ismay 23 Nov 40, PREM 3/330/9.

45. War Diaries of No. 3 Cdo, DEFE 2/38; No. 4 Cdo, DEFE 2/40; No. 7 Cdo, DEFE 2/43; and No. 8 Cdo, DEFE 2/44.
46. Keyes to VCIGS 10 Oct 40, DEFE 2/698.
47. Though the terminology stems from the same rational, No. 11 Special Air Service Battalion was later to become the 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, and has no lineal connection with present day Special Air Service units.
48. VCIGS to Keyes 12 Oct 40, DEFE 2/698. Clarke states that the only way he managed to have the term 'commando' approved in the first place was to point out that it had been in the order of the battle for the South African forces for over fifty years. The groups were:
 - No. 1 SS Bn: Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9 Ind Coys (the battalion was apparently never fully formed during this period)
 - No. 2 SS Bn: Nos. 9 and 11 Cdos and Nos. 1, 6, and 8 Ind Coys
 - No. 3 SS Bn: Nos. 4 and 7 Cdos
 - No. 4 SS Bn: Nos. 3 and 8 Cdos
 - No. 5 SS Bn: Nos. 5 and 6 Cdos
 Information contained in the SS Bn War Diaries is fragmentary. The War Diary of No. 1 SS Bn is missing. The War Diary of No. 2 Cdo/11 SAS Bn is in the Airborne Forces Museum at Aldershot. The remaining SS Bn War Diaries are listed under DEFE 2/38 through 2/45.
49. 'Statement by Brigadier Laycock' undated, DEFE 2/690.
50. Keyes to Dill 17 Sep 40, DEFE 2/698.
51. 'Minutes of Meeting Held in DCO's Office' 21 Oct 40, DEFE 2/353.
52. COS(40) 438 Mtg 27 Dec 40, CAB 79/8.
53. C-in-C Home Fleet to Adm 1224/2 Jan 41, PREM 3/328/11A.
54. Churchill to Pound 3 Jan 41, PREM 3/328/11A.
55. Hornby to MA of CIGS 3 Jan 41, PREM 3/328/11A. By this time, the independent companies and commandos had been amalgamated.
56. COS(41) 8th Mtg 4 Jan 41 and COS(41) 11th Mtg 7 Jan 41, CAB 79/8; Hornby to Hollis 5 Jan 41 and Hollis to Hornby 5 Jan 41, DEFE 2/353.
57. COS(4) 1033 (JP) 'Raiding Operations in the Mediterranean' 11 Dec 40, CAB 80/24.
58. Note of 26 Nov 40, DEFE 2/116; COS(40) 404th Mtg 27 Nov 40, CAB 79/8; JP(40) 140th Mtg 30 Nov 40, CAB 84/2; and COS(40) 44 (O) (JP) 'Operations BRISK and TRUCK' 6 Dec 40, CAB 80/106.

59. COS(41) 15 (0) 'Note by Secretary' 21 Jan 41, CAB 80/56.
60. Ismay to Churchill 21 Jan 41, Annex to COS(41) 17 (0) 'Mediterranean Policy' 22 Jan 41, CAB 80/56. As six commandos were originally scheduled for WORKSHOP, and authority was given to hold only one back, it would seem that five should have sailed rather than the three that did. The reason that only three went to the Middle East lies in the space available on the three Glen class LSI(L), though the details are somewhat confusing. The strength of the three SS battalions was 3,390 men, whereas, according to the No. 4 SS Bn War Diary, the three ships could only carry 2,640. This battalion noted that it left three troops behind when embarked, and it may be assumed that the other battalions did likewise. In effect the three ships were carrying between four and five commandos. When Churchill directed that one commando be left behind, the result was that only three commandos were sent. Whether a fourth commando was to go is uncertain, for the excess space was used to transport 750 critically needed replacements for the Middle East.
61. Keyes to COS 28 Jan 41, DEFE 2/698 and COS(4) 23 (0) 'SS Troops Raising New Commandos' 29 Jan 41, CAB 80/56.
62. Keyes to Haydon 30 Jan 41, DEFE 2/698.
63. Haydon to Keyes 1 Feb 41, DEFE 2/698 and 'Minutes of 49th Meeting Held in DCO's Office' 3 Feb 41, DEFE 2/54.
64. 'Minutes of WO Meeting on Reorganisation of SS Troops' 9 Feb 41, DEFE 2/54.
65. COS(40) 608 'Royal Marine Brigade' 6 Aug 40, CAB 80/16; WO Brief on COS(40) 608 9 Aug 41, WO 193/387; and COS(40) 258th Mtg 9 Aug 40, CAB 79/6.
66. Tentative dates taken from Navy List issues of 1940, published by the Admiralty and interview of Major General J. L. Moulton by author, 10 Nov 78.
67. JP(41) 100 'Future Combined Operations' 6 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.
68. WO Brief on COS(41) 23 (0) 10 Feb 41, WO 193/377.
69. COS(41) 50th Mtg 12 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.
70. Keyes to COS 17 Jan 41, DEFE 2/353.
71. Hollis to Churchill 21 Jan 41, PREM 3/328/11A.
72. Dalton to Churchill 17 Jan 41, PREM 3/328/7.
73. Keyes to Tovey 25 Feb 41, PREM 3/328/7.

74. COS(41) 25th Mtg 21 Jan 41, CAB 79/8.
75. Churchill to Ismay 21 Jan 41, PREM 3/328/7.
76. COS(41) 28th Mtg 24 Jan 41, CAB 79/8.
77. COS(41) 30th Mtg 25 Jan 41, CAB 79/8.
78. Hollis to Churchill 27 Jan 41, PREM 3/328/7.
79. Keyes to C-in-C Home Fleet 6 Feb 41, K 13/6.
80. Keyes to C-in-C Home Fleet 21 Feb 41, K 13/6.
81. Tovey to Keyes 23 Feb 41, K 13/1.
82. Keyes to Tovey 25 Feb 41, K 13/6.
83. C-in-C Home Fleet to Adm 1237/23 Feb 41, PREM 3/328/7. Churchill's comments are noted on the message.
84. Adm to C-in-C Home Fleet 1139/24 Feb 41, PREM 3/328/7.
85. See St. George-Saunders, Green Beret, pp. 50-51; HMSO, Combined Operations, (London 1943), pp. 33-36; and Durnford-Slater, Commando, (London 1953), pp. 43, 55.
86. Dalton to Churchill 6 Mar 41, PREM 3/328/7.
87. Ismay to Churchill 12 Mar 41, PREM 3/328/7.
88. COS(41) 119 'Communication of Information Regarding Operations to the Press' 23 Feb 41, CAB 80/26.
89. COS(41) 69th Mtg 25 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.
90. COS(41) 72nd Mtg 26 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.
91. Tovey to Keyes 23 Feb 41, K 13/6.
92. These were Helder, Ymuiden, Hook, Flushing, Antwerp, Terneuzen, Zeebrugge, Ostend, Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, Dieppe, Havre, and Cherbourg.
93. Notes on inclosure to letter of 10 Feb 41, K 140/3/2.
94. COS(41) 69th Mtg 25 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.
95. Annex to COS(41) 76th Mtg 28 Feb 41 and COS(41) 69th Mtg 18 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.
96. JP(41) 138 'Operations Against the Channel Islands' 20 Feb 41, CAB 34/27.

97. COS(41) 76th Mtg 28 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.
98. COS(41) 49 (0) 'Operation ATTABOY' 1 Mar 41, CAB 80/57.
99. COS(41) 52 (0) 'Operation ATTABOY' 7 Mar 41, CAB 80/57.
100. COS(41) 54 (0) 'Operation ATTABOY' 9 Mar 41, CAB 80/57.
101. Keyes to Ismay 10 Mar 41, K 13/8.
102. COS(41) 93rd and 94th Mtgs 11 Mar 41, CAB 79/9.
103. COS(41) 5th Mtg (0) 19 Mar 41, CAB 79/55.

CHAPTER IV

THE AIRBORNE FORCES

The growth of the commandos, despite the lack of an appropriate role for them in the strategy followed by the British for the war against Germany, can be contrasted with the retarded development of the other force demanded by Churchill, the parachute troops. The Air Ministry had been moved to some action by his call for 5,000 such troops, and a training school was established at Ringway, Manchester, on 21 June 1940 under the newly promoted Squadron Leader L. A. Strange. This school, termed the Central Landing School, was to come under the operational control of the Director of Plans at the Air Ministry. This arrangement was different than that in regard to the Combined Operations Headquarters and the combined operations training centers. The Directorate of Combined Operations, from the start, had far less control over the development of airborne forces than it had over the other raiding forces, and the subordination of the Central Landing School to the Air Staff made the airborne forces particularly susceptible to the prevailing Air Ministry prejudices. At the start nothing existed at Ringway. The airfield was only half built, the six Whitley bombers allocated had not yet been converted to drop parachutists, the training parachutes were still being manufactured, and the number of trained parachutists available to serve as instructors was absurdly small.¹

Churchill soon heard of a lower figure of 700 to 800 parachutists being proposed by the Air Ministry, and on 22 June 1940 wrote confirming

his desire for 5,000, as originally specified.² Bourne supported this figure, intending that the majority of the commandos be parachutists. He held a meeting of all the interested parties in his office on 1 July 1940. Inquiries were made as to whether the figure of 5,000 could be trained in three months, and an outline plan was prepared for this number, requiring the establishment of six further schools, one for each army command. Strange thought this large-scale training feasible provided that someone with authority could give quick decisions on policy and authorize the necessary equipment. He asserted that he could begin training the first group of 100 men at Ringway within a week, if he 'could take decisions that might not be covered by RAF regulations'. To a large measure, this remark apparently referred to overly restrictive safety precautions.³ The Central Landing School could graduate a course of 100 men each week, the course itself lasting approximately a month. Agreement was reached that the first 100 volunteers from No. 2 Commando would be sent to Ringway by 8 July 1940, though the course was not to start until a week later.⁴

These plans did not appeal to the Air Staff, and Air Commodore J. C. Slessor, the Director of Plans, wrote a cautionary letter to Bourne on 4 July 1940.

I am rather uneasy about the air side of the development of parachute troops, and am afraid that if we are not careful it will be a case of more haste less speed. I am also afraid that if we try to go too fast we may have unnecessary training casualties which will be a set back to the development of parachute units.

The fact is that, until two or three weeks ago when the Prime Minister told us to develop five thousand parachute troops, we had, rightly or wrongly, not made any preparations, either in the sphere of aircraft or personnel, to raise any parachute troops at all. That may show lamentable lack of foresight on the part of the Air and General Staffs in the past, but we need not worry about that now. The point is that the development of what amounts to a completely new arm of the service, requiring a technique which we

have never considered, material which we have never thought of providing, and special personnel whom we have never thought of training, is a thing that can not be done in the twinkling of an eye.

Slessor therefore desired that the first course be considered an experimental one, and that the Central Landing School not be tied to any particular schedule for producing parachutists. There was, after all, 'not really a tearing hurry', since it would be some time before all the Whitleys on hand could be modified to carry parachutists, or the parachute units themselves were fully trained for ground combat.⁵

Bourne thought that a greater sense of urgency was required than that shown in Slessor's letter, and replied that he wanted the parachutists 'as early as other requirements permit'.⁶ Bourne was concerned with the use of parachutists for raiding, but this would entail the problem of withdrawal after the raid, and on 7 July 1940 Bourne's air advisor told him that recovery by aircraft was considered impracticable.⁷ This problem with recovery would limit the utility of the parachute troops as far as the Combined Operations Headquarters was concerned, and this was the primary reason for the gradual separation of their development from that of the other raiding forces, despite the logic of having the Directorate of Combined Operations responsible for both airborne and seaborne units.

Keyes was initially keenly interested in the formation of parachute troops. While he did not get to see the commandos until September 1940, he visited the Central Landing School on 26 July 1940, shortly after assuming the post of Director of Combined Operations. The first fatality had occurred there the day prior to his visit, and all parachute training had been suspended. He consequently could only watch dummy drops, and even these were not very successful.⁸ He was neverthe-

less impressed by the spirit and enthusiasm of the staff and the first course of volunteers then in training. He was also brought face to face with the technical and material problems hindering progress when, after trying to drop himself through the bottom hole of a Whitley bomber while on the ground, he agreed that it was a most unsuitable aircraft. A deadlock had ensued, however, as the War Office, after the fatality, had prohibited parachuting from Whitleys, while the Air Ministry maintained that there was no alternative. Keyes immediately went to Churchill, recommending the procurement of Douglas DC-3s either by hire from the Dutch KLM or by purchase from the Americans.⁹ This procurement proved to be more difficult than anticipated, and so, after their modification, the War Office agreed to the use of the Whitleys, which were destined to continue in this role through 1942.

During a brief review of the raiding policy with the Chiefs of Staff on 6 August 1940, Keyes was asked about the future of the parachute troops. A total of 500 men were then being trained as parachutists, although a scarcity of suitable aircraft was delaying progress.¹⁰ Churchill, seeing the minutes of this meeting, annotated that he had demanded 5,000 men, not 500. Ismay then explained to him that, although the eventual goal was 5,000, the existing limitations of the training equipment made it impracticable to go above 500. Not one to be put off, Churchill asked when the target figure of 5,000 would be reached.¹¹ The secretariat then asked the Combined Operations Headquarters to explain the position to Churchill, who kept 'harping on the fact that he said 5,000 parachute troops were to be got ready'.¹² The Combined Operations Headquarters replied that the position was such that, with 100 men being trained per week, the figure could be reached in about 12 months. The

total lift capability of the only Whitley bomber group, however, was just 600 to 700 parachutists. Furthermore, in view of the current operational commitments, the Air Ministry was not prepared to divert aircraft and personnel to increase the training rate unless the operational role of the parachutists was clearly defined and a definite requirement existed for them.¹³ It was in part the failure of the War Office and the Combined Operations Headquarters to formulate this role that allowed the Air Ministry to remain so obstinate, with the consequent desultory growth of the force.

Keyes complained to Ismay on 27 August 1940 about the service departments' reluctance to press on with airborne forces. The Air Ministry, in particular, was accused of putting every obstacle in the way. 'It is not easy to get on with the war', Keyes noted. He told Ismay he was writing to him rather than Churchill as there seemed to be nothing that even Churchill could do 'unless he starts afresh and gets two or three ardent offensive spirits--free from everlasting committees, to help him do so'.¹⁴

The Air Ministry justified its position to Churchill on 31 August 1940. It explained that it had adopted two principles in the formation of airborne forces. Owing to the need for the expansion of the bomber force as rapidly as possible, and because of the shortage of personnel, there was no question of forming separate troop transport units. Parachute dropping must therefore be an alternative role for the heavy bomber squadrons. Also, all training would have to be conducted with the aircraft used for operations, and there was thus no sense in procuring aircraft with door exits for training. These principles gave the Air Ministry a firm basis for decrying the diversion

of valuable bomber aircraft to airborne forces unless a definite objective was in view. Furthermore, the Air Ministry believed that 'dropping troops from the air by parachutes is a clumsy and obsolescent method and that there are far more important possibilities in gliders'.¹⁵ Churchill accepted the Air Ministry's position, but remained somewhat sceptical.

Of course, if the glider scheme is better than parachutes, we should pursue it, but is it being seriously taken up? Are we not in danger of being fobbed off with one doubtful and experimental policy and losing the other one which has already been proved?¹⁶

The Air Staff were still uneasy at the failure to define a role for airborne forces. 'The only requirement which has so far been stated with authority is the PM's demand for 5,000 parachutists to be trained as soon as possible', it noted on 2 September 1940. This was considered an insufficient basis for the satisfactory development of the arm, especially as the idea of landing the main portion of the airborne force in gliders, rather than by parachute, was simultaneously being advocated. The Air Ministry therefore proposed a meeting of all parties concerned to formulate a clear policy which would include a statement of the size of the force required and an outline of the operations in which the force was expected to take part. The Air Ministry position was that no more than 1,000 parachutists would ever be needed. These troops would have no raiding function, but would be suited for large-scale operations, to take the enemy in the rear. Even then, it seemed that the operational requirement could be met by glider troops. The Air Ministry even proposed that the parachutists should be airmen rather than soldiers, as in the German forces, so that there would be no division of authority in airborne operations. The question of the functions and

responsibilities of the Director of Combined Operations and his staff in relation to the formation, training, and subsequent employment of airborne forces was also raised. Given the Air Ministry's position on the unsuitability of the parachutists for raiding, it was evident that it thought the connection with the Combined Operations Headquarters would be minimal.¹⁷ Whether or not the main purpose of this point was to obtain a relief from the continuing barrage of criticism, Keyes was levelling at the Air Ministry must remain a matter of conjecture.

MO 9 prepared the basis of the War Office response to the points raised by the Air Ministry. The core of any airborne policy was seen to be dependent upon the Royal Air Force's projected ability to lift troops. A target figure, 'however vague', would be very helpful to the War Office. The War Office was not completely sure of Keyes' views on the subject, but Hornby, then Assistant Director of Combined Operations (Army), apparently thought that the Combined Operations Headquarters was not very much concerned with airborne operations. As far as the War Office was concerned, airborne operations seemed to be analagous to amphibious operations, and the Directorate's responsibilities should be similar for both. This position was logical but did not take into account the fact that, whereas the Director of Combined Operations directly controlled the Combined Training Centre for amphibious operations, he did not have and was not likely to obtain, control of the Central Landing School, then being reorganized by the Air Ministry into the Central Landing Establishment.¹⁸ The tenuous connection between the Combined Operations Headquarters and the Air Ministry, and the Air Ministry's fear of anything that might detract from the bomber offensive, served to strengthen that department's grip on the airborne

forces, no matter what the theoretical position of the Director of Combined Operations should have been. At a meeting held on 5 September 1940 to discuss the establishment of the Central Landing Establishment, the Combined Operations Headquarters managed to obtain merely the right of access to the school, with the responsibility of advising in 'matters of training and development to meet the types of operations under consideration by the DCO'. The responsibility for airborne policy remained firmly in the hands of the Air Ministry.¹⁹

The proposed conference to formulate a role for airborne forces was also held on 5 September 1940, with the Vice Chief of the Air Staff, the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the Deputy Director of Combined Operations, the Director of Military Training, and a whole host of minor functionaries attending. The Vice Chief of the Air Staff commented adversely on the failure to develop a clear doctrine, warning the meeting that for the foreseeable future any policy enunciated would be limited by aircraft availability. Previous enemy airborne operations were discussed, but the Air Staff belittled the German effort, claiming that much of their success was due only to the lack of opposition. Prospects of these conditions recurring seemed doubtful. The large-scale German pattern was also not considered the best guide for the British, incapable as they were of achieving the German force levels. Air superiority and surprise were also deemed preconditions for successful operations. This appeared sensible, but the difficulty was that the Air Staff declared their attainment to be highly unlikely, particularly if the operations proposed included the subsequent air evacuation of the force.

Clarke outlined the three types of operations that the War

Office had in mind: a raid by airborne troops on a selected position with a subsequent evacuation by air; a raid followed by an evacuation by sea; and an operation in which the airborne forces would form the spearhead and would be followed by supporting forces. The prospects of the first two, in the light of the Air Ministry position, now appeared slight, so the primary role was seen by the conference as the third, which could also embrace the requirements for minor operations.²⁰

The size of the force was then considered, Hornby stating that the largest airborne force needed for operations by the Combined Operations Headquarters would be about 1,000 men. In view of the 'expensible' nature of these forces, a total of 3,000 was therefore agreed upon for the spring of 1941. The conference also accepted the Air Ministry position that the majority of this force could be carried in gliders, and so only 300 to 500 men, to include saboteurs, had to be trained parachutists. The initial order had been placed for twelve gliders each carrying 8 men, and as soon as some experience was gained with these, the type and quantity of the gliders ultimately needed for the force could be determined. The Directorate of Combined Operations was asked to prepare the requirements for gliders carrying light tanks, guns, and heavy equipment. It was agreed that the glider pilots should be Army personnel, although their training would be undertaken by the Royal Air Force. The parachutists were also to be soldiers, since some Army volunteers were already in training, although, as in the case of the glider pilots, the Royal Air Force would be responsible for their technical training.

Hornby, reading a note from Keyes, expressed concern that the Directorate of Combined Operations should be responsible for advice on

the air training of the airborne forces and on their means of transport. Hornby thought that the Directorate's responsibilities for operations would be confined principally to the conduct of raids and for insuring that the special training for any large-scale operations, as well as the provision of the necessary troops and equipment, was accomplished. This interpretation was accepted by the conference, but in practice little coordination was ever accomplished.²¹

In the early stages, the Directorate's links with the airborne forces were primarily based on the fact that No. 2 Commando was being trained in the parachute role. Throughout the autumn of 1940, as the ties between the Combined Operations Headquarters and the other commandos became progressively stronger, until these commandos for all practical purposes were part of it, the opposite occurred with this parachute unit. With the formation of the Special Service battalions, No. 2 Commando's organization changed. On 21 November 1940, it was designated 11 Special Air Service Battalion, and its establishment was altered to include both parachute and glider wings. It eventually became, in September 1941, 1 Parachute Battalion.²² The Directorate's links with this unit, so logical in theory, had by then been long abandoned.

A further meeting on airborne policy was held at the War Office on 5 October 1940, by which time the parachutists were recognized as being somewhat outside the jurisdiction of the Combined Operations Headquarters.²³ The reason for this, given by the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff on 12 October 1940, was

...that they are more likely now to be included in an 'airborne force' which will form an integral part of the imperial reserve of troops for offensive operations overseas. Furthermore, discussions between the War Office and the Air Ministry have led

to the conclusion that the difficulties of evacuating parachutists from hostile territory will for some time to come severely limit their employment in raiding operations.²⁴

This limited view of the use of airborne forces was accepted by the Combined Operations Headquarters without much resistance. This acceptance was primarily due to Keyes' concern with current operations, the impossibility of wresting control of the airborne policy from the Air Ministry, and the War Office's tendency to restrict the Combined Operations Headquarters to raiding. The Air Ministry, having gained control of the airborne forces, promptly put them aside in favor of its other tasks. Despite the forecast of a force of 3,000 by the spring of 1941, the force actually remained at the strength of one battalion, with virtually no gliders, until, after more prodding by Churchill, a parachute brigade started forming in September 1941.

The Combined Operations Headquarters had not totally abandoned the idea of using airborne troops in raids, although opportunities to do so were scarce. The interest in raiding in the Mediterranean in late 1940 had resulted in the proposal for Project T, later COLOSSUS, noted in the previous chapter. This was a raid conducted by a small parachute party to cut off the water supply to towns in the heel of Italy, an area where local water supplies were inadequate. The Chiefs of Staff approved this operation in principle on 4 January 1941, and on 8 January 1941 asked Keyes to submit an outline of it to Churchill.²⁵

The raid, which the Chiefs of Staff saw as having a reasonable chance of success, involved the dropping of a small element of No. 11 Special Air Service Battalion, which would be recovered by submarine. The raid would be staged out of Malta, and was planned for the moonlight period of 10-12 February 1941. The aircraft and troops would

have to be in Malta by 4 February 1941, which did not leave much time for preparation. An immediate decision was thus called for, and Churchill's approval was secured on 9 January 1941.²⁶ An unusual feature of the arrangements for the operation, termed COLOSSUS, was that, although the operation orders were to be flown out to the Mediterranean from London, it had 'been left to the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean's discretion to make the best possible arrangements to get the party off' after the raid.²⁷

The conduct of COLOSSUS was controlled through the Commander-in-Chief Malta. On 11 February 1941, the Admiralty received a message from him saying that the paratroop had been successful. One bomber aircraft on a diversionary mission had been lost, however, and before going down it had transmitted the rendezvous location for the submarine in a very low-level code. The Vice Admiral, Malta, nevertheless intended to carry out the evacuation, though he had advised the submarine to exercise the utmost caution, and he had requested close air reconnaissance of the withdrawal area by the Royal Air Force.²⁸ The Chiefs of Staff considered this situation on the morning of 13 February 1941. No information had since been received from the raiding party, and reconnaissance of the objective area had disclosed no apparent damage. In Pound's view, 'as the operation had miscarried it was probable that most, if not all, of the personnel had been killed or rounded up', and he therefore considered it wrong to risk the loss of a valuable submarine and crew in attempting the rendezvous. The Chiefs of Staff agreed.²⁹

This decision upset Keyes. He thought that in view of the precautions taken by the Vice Admiral, Malta, the rescue attempt should proceed. He therefore wrote to Churchill that 'I consider our failure

to make any effort to carry out the salvage arrangements, promised to the participants, amounts to a clear breach of faith'.³⁰ Churchill discussed the matter with the Chiefs of Staff, but after a detailed explanation he accepted their decision. This proved, ultimately, to be the correct choice, as none of the party ever reached the rendezvous but Keyes' stand shows why he was popular with the commando leaders.³¹

The control arrangements for COLOSSUS had apparently been somewhat confused, for Keyes later told the Air Ministry that responsibility for air preparations and execution must be clearly defined. In the case of COLOSSUS, 'it was not clear whether the operation was being undertaken under the DCO or the Air Ministry'.³² The control of airborne operations was as a result accorded completely to the service ministries. On 26 April 1941, the Air Ministry informed the Combined Operations Headquarters that it had reached agreement with the War Office that the conduct of airborne operations would be the responsibility of the Air Ministry until the troops had landed. It was the Air Ministry's view that this division of responsibility must also apply to raids such as COLOSSUS, since 'the Air Ministry alone are in a position to organise the air forces involved and issue the orders to them'.³³ The Combined Operations Headquarters does not appear to have been consulted beforehand on this arrangement, as might reasonably have been expected, but the position was accepted without argument. The problems with COLOSSUS apparently bore out the Air Staff's earlier contention that airborne raids were not practicable, and in any case it was by then clear that Churchill was not favorably disposed towards airborne raiding.

Churchill's attitude was revealed in a curious sequel to COLOSSUS. After the operation, he had sent a sharp note to Ismay, indicating that

he did not remember 'having been consulted in any way' about the proposal to use parachute troops. 'The use of parachute troops was a serious step to take, in view of the invasion aspect here, and I would rather not have opened this chapter, raising as it does all sorts of questions about the status and uniform of these troops.'³⁴ He was mollified when presented with the two minutes on COLOSSUS that he had signed, but the incident illustrates problems that might have been encountered in the creation of an airborne raiding policy, even if all the other obstacles had been overcome. In any event, airborne raiding was practicable only in very particular conditions, when withdrawal by sea was feasible. There were to be no more suggestions for airborne raids until 1942, when the Bruneval raid was conducted. This would admittedly be a classic model of such a raid, but again it was conducted under very special conditions, and for a particular purpose.

The difference in the development of the commandos and the airborne forces is instructive, for they were both theoretically in the same position, and suffered from similar problems in the definition of role. The effect of the organizational structure is apparent here, for the airborne forces were subordinated to a body which clearly placed its priorities elsewhere. The airborne forces were in effect foisted on the Air Ministry by Churchill, but his influence could only be felt sporadically. There was no interested person who had organizational responsibility for them, and who could foster their growth. The airborne forces, without a clear operational requirement, thus remained static for almost the entire period covered. The commandos, in contrast, were under an independent organization controlled by a forceful individual who was intent on action, and who had Churchill's ear.

Although the original role for which the commandos had been formed had almost disappeared by March 1941, their growth and continued existence had been assured because of the vested interests then involved. They had taken on a life of their own and had been converted to other roles primarily because of their availability, rather than because of a rational examination of the operational requirements. This well points out the influence of personality and organizational interest.

ENDNOTES--CHAPTER IV

1. Air Ministry to 22 Group 20 Jun 40, AIR 2/5486 and 'The History of No. 1 PTS 1940-1945' by Flt. Lt. P. W. Jevons, held by No. 1 PTS Museum, RAF Brize Norton.
2. Churchill to Ismay 22 Jun 40, PREM 3/32/1.
3. Similar complaints concerning the RAF are at times voiced today by parachute units.
4. Strange to DDO(Air) 8 Jul 40, held by No. 1 PTS Museum.
5. Slessor to Bourne 4 Jul 40, DEFE 2/791.
6. Bourne to Slessor 5 Jul 40, DEFE 2/791.
7. 'Notes up to 10 July 1940' 10 Jul 40, DEFE 2/791.
8. 'The History of No. 1 PTS 1940-1945'.
9. Keyes to Churchill 27 Jul 40, K 140/3/3.
10. COS(40) 250th Mtg 6 Aug 40, CAB 79/5.
11. Churchill's note on Ismay to Churchill 10 Aug 40, PREM 3/32/1.
12. Jacob to Hornby 14 Aug 40, DEFE 2/791.
13. Knocker to Jacob 23 Aug 40, DEFE 2/791.
14. Keyes to Ismay 27 Aug 40, K 13/1.
15. Ismay to Churchill 31 Aug 41, PREM 3/32/1.
16. Churchill to Ismay 1 Sep 40, PREM 3/32/1.
17. 'Provision of Airborne Forces' 2 Sep 40, DEFE 2/791. Slessor was instrumental in outlining the Air Ministry position. He never really approved of airborne forces, and even after the war held that they had required a disproportionate amount of resources. See Appendix C in his book The Central Blue, (London 1956), pp. 661-667 for the Air Staff's view.
18. 'Notes on Items to be Discussed at AM Conference on 5 Sep' 4 Sep 40, DEFE 2/791.
19. 'Notes of a Meeting Held at 6:30 PM at AM to Discuss Organisation of a CLE' 5 Sep 40, DEFE 2/791.
20. In the light of the Bruneval raid, it is odd that this type of operation was abandoned so readily by both the War Office and the Combined Operations Headquarters during the conference.

21. 'Minutes of a Meeting Held at AM to Discuss Provision of Airborne Forces' 5 Sep 40, DEFE 2/791.
22. T. B. H. Otway, Airborne Forces, (War Office 1951), pp. 31-32.
23. DSD to DCO, DMO&P, DMT, DQ, DDMI(R) and DSD(W) 2 Oct 40, DEFE 2/791.
24. VCIGS to CIGS 12 Oct 40, WO 216/54.
25. Hollis to Hornby 5 Jan 41, DEFE 2/353 and COS(41) 13th Mtg 8 Jan 41, CAB 79/3.
26. Ismay to Churchill 8 Jan 41, PREM 3/100.
27. Ismay to Churchill 28 Jan 41, PREM 3/100.
28. V/Adm Malta to C-in-C Med and Adm 1105/11 Feb 41, PREM 3/100.
29. COS(41) 52nd Mtg 13 Feb 41, CAB 79/9.
30. Keyes to Churchill 13 Feb 41, PREM 3/100.
31. For a complete account, see Otway, pp. 63-65 and H. St. George-Saunders, The Red Beret, (London 1971), pp. 9-18.
32. DCO to DMC, Air Ministry 28 Mar 41, K 13/21.
33. DCO to ADCO(A) 26 Apr 41, K 13/24.
34. Churchill to Ismay 13 Feb 41, PREM 3/100. This was probably the result of overwork on Churchill's part, though G. St. J. Barclay in Their Finest Hour, (London 1977), p. 73, attributes it to a conscious attempt by him to avoid responsibility for the failure.

CHAPTER V

ASSISTANCE TO THE SOVIET UNION

From September of 1940 through the spring of 1941, the main hope for a British offensive amphibious operation was in the Mediterranean. 'Layforce' had been sent out from the United Kingdom with this in mind, but, arriving in March, it was consumed in the fighting for Crete in May. The Combined Operations Headquarters, from March 1941, was primarily concerned with preparations for Operation PUMA/PILGRIM, the contingency operation against the Canaries. By mid-summer the size of the force earmarked for this operation--including all the Special Service troops--had grown to over 25,000 men, and the units involved would, in the main, be held for the operation until October-November 1941. Raiding the Continent, at this time, was therefore a dead issue.

The change to an active raiding policy for Northwest Europe consequently came about not because of any inherent British requirement for such activity, but rather as a reaction to the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. On 23 June, the Chiefs of Staff met to consider ways in which the British might use the German invasion of the Soviet Union to their advantage, and Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, the Chief of the Air Staff, suggested that they might, under cover of preparations for a dummy invasion of the Continent, launch raids on the northern coast of France. It was thought that Canadian troops might be used for these raids, provided that the necessary landing craft and assault shipping could be found without interfering with the operation mounted against the Canaries. Keyes was

consequently instructed to prepare plans for a 24-hour raid of about a brigade group on the coast of France. The object of this would be 'to kill Germans and do as much damage as possible'.¹

Churchill was then having similar thoughts. The Royal Air Force had been conducting an air offensive over the Pas de Calais, which might result in British domination of the area. In this event, he characteristically asked the Chiefs of Staff to consider the launching of a large-scale raid of 25,000 to 30,000 men, 'perhaps the commandos plus one Canadian division', which ought to be able to achieve 'considerable result'.²

Keyes met the Chiefs of Staff on 24 June 1941 to consider the possibility of both large and small cross-Channel raids. He explained that the scope of such raids would be limited by the number of landing craft available and by the fact that there would be only about four hours of darkness at that time of year. If the restriction of not using the shipping held for the Atlantic islands operations was upheld, activities would be confined to putting a couple of hundred men ashore in fast motor boats. In the face of these limitations, large-scale raids were impracticable. Something less ambitious, he felt, might be accomplished by using all the available light craft. The Joint Planning Staff were nevertheless instructed to consider, in consultation 'as necessary' with the Joint Intelligence Committee and the Directorate of Combined Operations, the objectives for a raid on the northern French coast, on the scales of both the original instructions to Keyes and Churchill's request.³ The Joint Planning Staff readily agreed that Churchill's ideas were not practicable. A smaller raid was considered feasible, but the number of fast raiding craft available limited the

forces which could be employed and, consequently, the objective. The Chiefs of Staff finally accepted this limitation, and instructed Keyes on 26 June 1941 to draw up a plan for a raid, or raids, based on the considerations above, for submission to the Prime Minister.⁴

Keyes told the Chiefs of Staff on 1 July 1941 that, after discussions between his staff and the Joint Planning Staff, he was not prepared to recommend the suggestions subsequently made for a raid of 2,000 or more men supported by tanks. He would, if required, submit proposals for small-scale raids, on the general lines of BARBARIC, with the possible addition of parachute troops. This inclusion of parachute troops would get the Air Ministry deeply involved. The Canadians were still seen as the likely ground forces. Keyes thought that the first raids could be conducted between 16/17 and 19/20 July 1941, with forces of about 300 men carried in R-Craft. The target had not yet been selected, but the plans were in progress, and he would get in touch with the Canadian commander. Keyes was later reminded that this plan would also involve the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces, under whose command the Canadians were serving. The Chiefs of Staff approved Keyes' concept, and told him to continue the planning.⁵

The Royal Air Force 'fighter sweeps' then being conducted over the French coast were provoking no opposition and Eden, now the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, used this situation to persuade Churchill to approve the resumption of small raids. These would force the Luftwaffe to come out and fight, and, from a political view, a few successful raids would be valuable evidence to the Soviets, and others in Europe, that the British were capable of 'brisk offensive action'.⁶ Keyes had in the meanwhile agreed to proposals to use a few tanks (which

would be destroyed rather than re-embarked) on the first raid. The Special Operations Executive was by now also closely tied in with the project.⁷

Keyes described this raid, which was to take place in the Le Touquet area, to Churchill at a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting on 4 July 1941. Churchill was not impressed, thinking the proposed operation 'most inadequate and out of proportion to the general war situation'. The results would be very little and might involve a disproportionate loss. The Germans would claim to have repulsed the attack, and Churchill considered that the general attitude of the world 'would probably be ridicule at the feeble efforts which were all that we could achieve to help the Russians'. The whole affair would be a 'fiasco', and, while he sympathized with the troops' desire for action, he could see no good reasons for pursuing such a plan. The committee generally agreed with this view. They still considered that the contingency operations against the Atlantic islands must remain on standby, and consequently accepted that any large-scale raids on the coast of France were thereby ruled out. They also agreed that it would be undesirable to proceed with a small-scale raid from which no useful result could be expected.⁸

The Chiefs of Staff tried again on 7 July 1941 to have the raiding policy altered. Pound, with Dill's support, explained to Churchill certain deceptive measures and minor raids that the Chiefs of Staff had in mind, 'to keep the enemy on the jump, gain information, and give our troops experience in raiding and thereby improve morale'. Little or no information was being obtained from the French coast, and raiding seemed to be the only means available to improve the situation. These

raids were not to be considered part of the British effort to aid the Soviet Union, nor were they to be publicized. Churchill preferred a large-scale raid, as otherwise he thought the losses were apt to be out of proportion to the moral or material advantages gained. As this was clearly not possible at the time, however, he finally consented to raids by very small numbers of men. The Chiefs of Staff therefore issued directions for a policy on raids of the order of ten men or so.⁹

Churchill was not the only individual concerned about efforts to assist the Soviet Union. Eden had been approached by the Soviet ambassador on the subject and, while he agreed to the uselessness of the minor operations proposed by Keyes, he thought that it should be possible to prepare plans for a larger venture using the forces, including the commandos, earmarked for the Atlantic islands operations.¹⁰ Churchill, at about the same time, directed Keyes on 8 July 1941 to plan a raid in the north of Norway by 3,000 to 4,000 men, to stay two to four nights before withdrawal.¹¹ From this time on, Norway would become a fixation for Churchill similar to that of the Channel Islands. Keyes saw the Chiefs of Staff on this matter the same morning. He drew attention to the implications of carrying out a raid in this area, in almost perpetual daylight and out of the range of shore-based fighters. It could also be carried out only by using the forces earmarked for PUMA/PILGRIM. The Chiefs of Staff agreed with this, but nevertheless told him to prepare a plan for presentation to Churchill.¹²

The Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, had on 4 June 1941 considered a raid by one commando in Norway, but the scale of German opposition there had been found to be greater than that originally anticipated, and the Admiralty had not proceeded further with the

project. Keyes took this operation, termed HAMMERFEST, and proposed to carry it out with the two Royal Marine brigades then existing. He also proposed the use of two commandos for a raid on Spitzbergen, while the remaining Special Service troops were to be employed on cross-Channel raids. All the raids could take place about 28 July 1941, which would give the Atlantic islands force time to reassemble for its next favorable moon period in August.¹³

The Chiefs of Staff considered, concurrently, the use of the Atlantic islands force for operations elsewhere, as suggested by Eden. In a meeting on 9 July 1941, it was agreed that there was no possibility of landing a large force anywhere unless it was planned to remain in enemy territory for some time. It was thought extremely unlikely that any military object would be gained in an operation of this nature. If the raid were to be carried out under fighter cover, it would have to be limited to that part of the French coast between Dunkirk and Etaples. Insofar as an operation in Norway was concerned, it was felt that it would have no military effect, and would lay the British open to heavy shipping losses. These losses might be avoided if the expedition was sent to the far north of the country, but no worthwhile objectives could be found there. It thus seemed that there was no military advantage to be gained from any large-scale raid, and, if such an operation were to take place, it would therefore have to be staged in such a way as to result in the maximum political effect.¹⁴

The question was reviewed at a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting on 10 July 1941. The Chiefs of Staff had met a Soviet mission the day before and had been asked to mount an operation to draw enemy forces away from the Russian front. The Chiefs of Staff explained that

they had some air and naval actions in mind but that after examining the possibility of a large-scale raid, they had decided that its prospects were not good. In any event, the raid would not achieve the objective the Soviets had in mind. The chances of a really successful raid appeared small, and the Germans might be handed a propaganda victory when the raiding force withdrew. The Defence Committee (Operations) accepted this view, indicating that, although they were not hopeful of carrying out any considerable operations against the enemy coast in the near future, they would still like the Chiefs of Staff to explore the possibilities.¹⁵

This further study was referred to the Joint Planning Staff. In addition, the Joint Planning Staff, in consultation with the Directorate of Combined Operations, was to prepare a plan for a series of feints and raids on the French coast, with the intent of bringing about large-scale air battles. Keyes was also asked to begin the raiding of the coast by small parties as soon as possible.¹⁶ When they received these instructions, the Joint Planning Staff pointed out that small raids of any sort were the responsibility of the Directorate of Combined Operations. The task of planning all such operations against the French coast was therefore given to Keyes on 12 July 1941.¹⁷

By 14 July 1941, Keyes had some plans ready for small reconnaissance raids and was working on a larger operation. On 15 July 1941, he was given permission to start the reconnaissance raids.¹⁸ The first of these, generally supervised by the Flag Officer Commanding, Dover, was to be held sometime between 26 and 28 July 1941.¹⁹ Keyes, on 18 July 1941, then presented the Chiefs of Staff with his plan for a larger raid in the vicinity of the Pointe de Laire, termed RANSACK. This raid

would take place in August, and would involve a Royal Marine brigade and a commando, with seven assault ships and seven tank landing craft. All these forces would have to come from the units earmarked for the Atlantic islands.²⁰

The Soviets continued pressing for a landing in France.²¹ On 22 July 1941, the Chiefs of Staff therefore considered both the Joint Planning Staff report on a major landing in the vicinity of Cherbourg or Brest and Keyes' proposal for RANSACK. An operation against Spitzbergen, detailed below, had just been approved, and the Chiefs of Staff consequently decided that no raids on the French coast, other than the small reconnaissance raids previously authorized, could be conducted.²² The first of these small raids, CHESSE, was carried out by eleven men from No. 12 Commando near Calais early on the morning of 28 July 1941. It was later reported by the German propaganda ministry as an armed reconnaissance that had been beaten off.

As part of its attempt to secure relief from the German attack, the Soviet Union had proposed a joint operation against the mining facilities at Spitzbergen. The Chiefs of Staff indicated on 17 July 1941 that they favored this operation, and the Foreign Office then secured the approval of the Norwegian government.²³ At a Defence Committee (Operations) meeting of 21 July 1941, Churchill decided that it would be better if the operation were conducted solely by the British.²⁴ The Chiefs of Staff looked at the implementation of this the following day. The Joint Planning Staff were then instructed to prepare the dispatch of up to an infantry brigade to Spitzbergen as soon as possible without affecting the Atlantic islands operations. The troops sent would only occupy the island during the fall.²⁵

A naval reconnaissance of Spitzbergen was undertaken, and on 4 August 1941 the Admiralty informed the Chiefs of Staff that the island was not occupied by the Germans. It was then agreed that a force of one and a half infantry battalions, with an artillery battery, should be sent to the island as soon as possible to protect the naval anchorage and refuelling installations there, and to provide a deterrent to the enemy carrying out raids or an airborne attack on the island.²⁶ Brigadier A. E. Potts would command the expedition, which would consist of Canadian troops. By 6 August 1941, the Naval Staff had decided that it did not need to use the refuelling facilities at Spitzbergen, as operations against German shipping in the northern waters did not appear to be as profitable as first thought. The Chiefs of Staff decided to talk to Rear Admiral P. L. Vian, the commander of the reconnaissance force, before making a decision on the operation, now termed FLAGMAN.²⁷

Vian saw the Chiefs of Staff on 9 August 1941. There was now no military objective to be gained by sending a garrison to Spitzbergen, but a raid might still be useful for political and economic reasons. A revised plan for the operation, renamed GAUNTLET, was accordingly prepared by the Joint Planning Staff.²⁸ After modifications resulting from discussions with the Soviet and Norwegian governments, the plan and implementing directives were soon approved. On 16 August 1941, the Chiefs of Staff gave the go ahead for GAUNTLET.²⁹ The force sailed from the Clyde on 18 August and reached Spitzbergen on 25 August 1941. The Canadian troops and a few Norwegians landed from the liner Empress of Canada, and 2,000 Russian miners working on the island were embarked. The Russians were taken to Archangel, while the raiding force meanwhile

immobilized the mines, destroyed coal stocks, and dismantled the radio and meteorological stations. In the process, a good part of the Russian settlement at Barentsberg was accidentally destroyed by fire. The Empress of Canada returned to pick up the troops, and the force left for the Clyde on 3 September 1941, bringing along 765 Norwegians and 190 Frenchmen. No enemy interference was encountered during the operation.³⁰

During the period August through October 1941, repeated attempts were made to find a suitable large-scale operation against either the Norwegian or French coasts. The series of small reconnaissance raids continued. CHESSE had been discussed at the Chiefs of Staff level, but the two subsequent raids were conducted without reference to this committee. On 12 August 1941, Keyes asked the Vice Admiral, Dover, to carry out another raid, termed ACID DROP. This raid was to take place near Hardelot and Merlimont Plage, and would be conducted by two parties of fifteen men each, from No. 5 Commando. ACID DROP was executed the night of 30/31 August 1941. Neither party encountered the enemy, and no more than an hour was spent on shore. A follow-up operation at Ault-Layeux the next favorable night, termed CARTOON, was abandoned. On 11 September 1941, the Directorate of Combined Operations proposed a raid on St. Vaast and St. Aubin to the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, termed CHOPPER/DEEPCUT. This operation, by fifty-six men of No. 1 Commando, was executed on 27/28 September 1941.³¹

A drastic change in the organizational responsibility for raiding occurred in mid-September 1941. On 7 August 1941, the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces, General Sir Alan Brooke, had submitted a memorandum on the employment of Home Forces in attacks upon the French coast. He

stated that Home Forces had reached a reasonably good standard of training, but lacked experience in active operations. This shortcoming placed it at a grave disadvantage when compared with the German army, and he therefore urged strongly that any opportunities which presented themselves for operations on the French coast between Ostend and Cherbourg should be taken advantage of by his troops. These operations, in conjunction with the Navy and the Royal Air Force, would be planned by the commanders and staffs under whom the troops were serving, rather than by the Combined Operations Headquarters. Brooke was thinking of small-scale raids, which would cultivate the offensive spirit of his troops; relieve the monotony of coast defense; provide valuable experience to commanders, staffs, and troops in both the planning and execution of operations; and increase their expertise in operations with other services. Such raids would also provide information on enemy coast defenses, and would produce reactions by the Germans 'favourable to our war effort and that of our allies'. He therefore thought that not only should such raids be carried out by troops under his command, but that they should take place as frequently as British resources allowed.³²

The Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Lieutenant General Sir Henry Pownall--no friend of Keyes or the commandos--brought this request to the attention of the Chiefs of Staff on 15 August 1941. The Chiefs of Staff, 'while sympathising with the desire of the C-in-C Home Forces, to carry out raids on his front, agreed that there must be prior coordination with the DCO'. Brooke was therefore asked to see Keyes and arrive at some joint proposals.³³ He presented the Chiefs of Staff with the results of these discussions on 6 September 1941. There is little record of the conversations held, but Keyes had seemingly agreed

that the General Officers Commanders-in-Chief of Southeast and Southern Commands, and their subordinate units, should study, train for, and execute small raids on the coast opposite them, from Cap de la Hague to West Kapelle. They were to collaborate closely with the Directorate of Combined Operations in the preparation of outline plans, and the unit commanders responsible for the operations would then work out the detailed plans in coordination with the Vice Admiral, Dover, or the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth. Selected personnel would undergo courses at the establishments run by the Directorate of Combined Operations, and a few would also accompany the commandos on raids already planned. Brooke also requested that more landing craft be sent to the south coast, although the sticky problem of their control was not addressed.³⁴ The Chiefs of Staff agreed, in general, with these arrangements, and decided that the new responsibilities would be incorporated in an overall review of the machinery for combined operations then being undertaken.³⁵

During this period, the series of small raids on the French coast continued without interference, despite the changing of the formal responsibility. On 4 October 1941, Keyes submitted the plans to the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, for a small raid against some gun positions near Hougate, termed SUNSTAR. This raid would be conducted by a troop from No. 9 Commando, landing from the converted Belgian ship Prince Leopold. This raid was scheduled for the period 24-28 October 1941, but was postponed by the Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth due to weather. On 12/13 November, a small raid was then conducted near Les Hemmes-Grandes Hemmes, termed ASTRAXIAN. SUNSTAR was to be held later that month, but by then the change in raiding responsibility caused it to be reviewed.

The authority for certain raids having been delegated by Brooke to the General Officer Commander-in-Chief Southern Command, the latter had laid it down that raids in his area should be in two phases. The first phase would be that of small reconnaissance raids by a few men, which would avoid contact, followed by the second phase of large raids, both reconnaissance and destruction, which would be up to 36 hours in duration. The General Officer Commander-in-Chief was entirely opposed to raids of an intermediate size such as SUNSTAR, which he thought too large to gather information secretly, but not large enough to do serious damage. In fact, he considered that such intermediate size raids would only prejudice the chances of gathering intelligence for the larger raids.

The Combined Operations Headquarters pressed for the execution of SUNSTAR on the grounds that it was planned before these instructions were issued. The raid was eventually approved, and was carried out by eighty-eight men of No. 9 Commando on 23/24 November 1941. It was unsuccessful, as the landing craft landed in the wrong place and the troops could not surmount the cliffs at the spot in time to reach their objective before they had to withdraw. One further raid was carried out in 1941, a small foray termed CRUPPER, on the night of 26/27 November in the Etaples area. The responsibility for CRUPPER is unknown, though it would appear to have been a Combined Operations Headquarters operation.³⁶

At first glance, it seems surprising that Keyes would relinquish voluntarily this part of his authority, but it may not have been seen to be a great loss at the time. Other than the small reconnaissance raids, no operations had been allowed on the French coast since July

1940. The commitment of the commandos and landing craft to other, overseas projects being considered at the time also made it unlikely that raids would be conducted on the French coast for some time to come, and it was in fact the shortage of landing craft that would prevent the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces from mounting any raids in this area through the winter of 1941-42. Keyes was also involved concurrently in a major jurisdictional dispute in the re-arrangement of the combined operations organization, a dispute that would lead to his relief on 19 October 1941; and the raiding question may have seemed a minor matter in comparison. Keyes' replacement, Commodore Lord Louis Mountbatten, assumed the post at an opportune time, for the downgrading in priority of the contingency operations against the Atlantic islands would release the commandos and assault shipping tied up since March 1941, and would enable the British in October 1941 to initiate an active raiding policy in Northwest Europe. These raids, which actually started after the American entry into the war, were seen as alternative operations to a major landing, in aid of the Soviet Union, and were not a lineal descendant of the abortive raiding policy of June 1940 to June 1941.

Planning for raiding operations throughout Northwest Europe and in the Mediterranean started in earnest in October 1941. A large number of projects were initially considered, but attention soon focused on Italy and Norway. Due to conflicting requirements, the raid on Italy was abandoned, but two raids were conducted in Norway in December 1941. A third was attempted but was aborted. Some of the ideas that were first considered about this time were later to bear fruit as the famous Bruneval and St. Nazaire raids. As the amphibious capability was steadily growing the idea of a large raid was also seriously investigated.

The Dieppe raid of 1942, mounted under political pressure, was in fact the ultimate product of the policy first favored by Churchill in June 1940, rather than being the first of a series of operations leading up to the D-Day landings. As the capability to launch an actual invasion of the Continent became a reality, the raids conducted became a subordinate to that end.

ENDNOTES--CHAPTER V

1. COS(41) 221st Mtg 23 Jun 41, CAB 79/12.
2. COS(41) 116 (0) Churchill to Ismay for COS 23 June 41, CAB 80/58.
3. COS(41) 222nd Mtg 24 Jun 41, CAB 79/12.
4. COS(41) 225th Mtg 26 Jun 41, CAB 79/12 and JP(41) 485 'Action Against Northern France' 25 Jun 41, CAB 84/32.
5. COS(41) 230th Mtg 1 Jul 41, CAB 79/12 and Keyes to Hollis and Hollis to Keyes 1 Jul 41, K 13/8.
6. Eden to Churchill 2 Jul 41, PREM 3/330/9.
7. COS(41) 19th Mtg (0) 3 Jul 41, CAB 79/55.
8. DO(41) 46th Mtg 4 Jul 41, CAB 69/2.
9. DO(41) 47th Mtg 7 Jul 41, CAB 69/2 and COS(41) 235th Mtg 7 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.
10. Eden to Churchill 8 Jul 41, PREM 3/330/9.
11. Churchill to Ismay 8 Jul 41, PREM 3/330/9.
12. COS(41) 237th Mtg 8 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.
13. Keyes to Ismay 8 Jul 41, K 13/8.
14. COS(41) 238th Mtg 9 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.
15. DO(41) 50th Mtg 10 Jul 41, CAB 69/2.
16. COS(41) 241st Mtg 11 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.
17. COS(41) 243rd Mtg 12 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.
18. COS(41) 246th Mtg 15 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.
19. B. Ramsey to Keyes 18 Jul 41, K 13/8.
20. COS(41) 141 (0) Keyes to COS 20 Jul 41, CAB 80/58.
21. COS(41) 249th Mtg 17 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.
22. COS(41) 255th Mtg 22 Jul 41, CAB 79/13 and DCO Memo 20 Aug 41, DEFE 2/698.
23. COS(41) 249th Mtg 17 Jul 41, CAB 79/12.

24. DO(41) 52nd Mtg 21 Jul 41, CAB 69/2 and COS(41) 143 (0) 'Operations in the Far North' 20 Jul 41, CAB 80/58.
25. COS(41) 255th Mtg 22 Jul 41, CAB 79/13.
26. COS(41) 275th Mtg 4 Aug 41, CAB 79/13.
27. COS(41) 278th Mtg 6 Aug 41, CAB 79/13.
28. COS(41) 282nd Mtg 9 Aug 41, CAB 79/13.
29. COS(41) 285th Mtg 12 Aug 41 and COS(41) 289th Mtg 16 Aug 41, CAB 79/13.
30. COS(41) 565 'Spitsbergen Operation' 10 Sep 41, CAB 80/30.
31. War Diary of COHQ for Aug-Sep 41, DEFE 2/1; ACID DROP, DEFE 2/65; and 'Small Scale Raids in Europe' undated, DEFE 2/694.
32. COS(41) 487 'Raiding Operations' 11 Aug 41, CAB 80/29.
33. COS(41) 288th Mtg 15 Aug 41, CAB 79/13.
34. COS(41) 192 (0) 'Raiding Operations' 6 Sep 41, CAB 80/59.
35. COS(41) 314th Mtg 8 Sep 41, CAB 79/14.
36. Details of most of these operations are outlined in the COHQ War Diary, DEFE 2/2.

CONCLUSION

The course of development of forces for raiding during the 'British war' is reasonably apparent when framed by the preparations for raiding up to Dunkirk and the activities subsequent to the entry of the Soviet Union into the war. This development can be broken down into two phases, basically along the lines of the second and third chapters, and serves as an excellent example of the pitfalls likely to be encountered in the establishment of special purpose forces. Many of the problems encountered are inherent in any such force, others were the product of particular circumstances; but the new product of the combination of these factors was a force that was radically different from that first envisaged and which consumed a disproportionate amount of time, men, and material in respect to the results achieved during the period in which their original role pertained.

Until Dunkirk, there was no clear need for raiding forces, and those that were formed were unilateral projects of the service departments. The Royal Marines were just becoming operationally ready for their role when they were diverted for contingency operations in the Atlantic. This diversion left a vacuum which was filled, in the unexpected emergency of the Norwegian invasion, by the ad hoc independent companies. These latter units were formed for a unique role, one which they never really had a chance to practice, and were on the point of disbandment after the Norwegian campaign ended.

The evacuation of the field army from the Continent in June 1940 presented the planners with totally new requirements for offensive

operations, requirements that could seemingly best be filled, considering the resources available, by a small group of unconventional warfare forces. This was an idea that supposedly received the wholehearted support of the Prime Minister, but the hectic state of affairs at the time of the surrender of France and the entry of Italy into the war prevented the discussion necessary to work out what was, in reality, a completely different conception of operations. The period from the establishment of MO 9 until the appointment of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes thus saw the military working out a comprehensive scheme for a raiding organization intended to harass continually the occupied coasts by small-scale raids. The military were at the same time excluded from the events leading up to the establishment of the Special Operations Executive, which was to assume the basic role originally foreseen for the commandos. There were many valid military reasons for the raiding policy espoused, and these have been given in detail in the second and third chapters. Under the pressure of events, however, the organizations involved in the initial establishment of the Special Service forces did not realize that such a policy of small raids had never been favored by Churchill, primarily on political grounds. Churchill saw such small forays as an admission of British weakness and considered them totally irrelevant to the strategy by which the Germans were to be defeated.

Churchill, on his part, never fully understood the role for which the Special Service troops had been formed. They struck his imagination, and became one of his proteges, but he always saw them being used for his own purposes, as specialist assault troops for large-scale operations. Though such a force was specified in the

amphibious doctrine developed in 1937-1938, this was not really a role for which the Special Service forces were suitably organized, trained, or equipped. Churchill's policy of large-scale operations was also not fully practicable. Though he often seemed to think that the main problem was one of attitude rather than resources, the bare fact was that through 1941 the British simply did not have the capability to mount large-scale raids on the Continent.

The appointment of Sir Roger Keyes as the Director of Combined Operations and the ban by Churchill on small raids, both of which occurred in July 1940, ushered in a new phase for the Special Service forces. With the small raids favored by the military prohibited, and the large raids favored by Churchill and, initially, Keyes impracticable, the major problem facing the Special Service forces was, in effect, a justification for their existence. The failure to develop a clear and comprehensive role for the airborne forces at about the same time was to result in these forces languishing on the sidelines for the remainder of the 'British war', and the same could conceivably have happened to the Special Service forces. A further factor against the Special Service forces was the orthodox opposition encountered within the service departments.

The personalities involved, particularly that of Sir Roger Keyes, now began to play a major part in the development of the Special Service forces. As detailed in chapter three, Keyes was intent on offensive action and was not too particular in respect to location or type. The Special Service forces were the only troops he could call upon for operations, and so he had a vested interest in their existence. He gradually developed the idea of using the troops and shipping under his

command as an amphibious striking force, capable of assuming the responsibility for the various contingency operations in the Atlantic or executing amphibious operations in the Mediterranean or raiding. By March 1941, MO 9 had been disbanded, and the commandos were firmly under the control of the Combined Operations Headquarters for use in this striking force, soon to be targeted against the Canaries islands. The commandos were by now fulfilling one of the original functions of the Royal Marines, and the idea of raiding the Continent, for which they had been formed, was forgotten.

The purpose of this study is to provide insight into the problems encountered in the formation of the commandos and airborne forces, rather than to judge their actions. By the strict terms of reference of June 1940, the Special Service forces could not be deemed a marked success. But then it is the nature of war that much good may come, unexpectedly, from what would seem to be bad decisions, and many battles have been won on erroneous information. The Special Service forces more than justified their existence under conditions hardly foreseen in June 1940. When all is said and done, they were another historic contribution to the story of British arms, and were well suited to comparison with their predecessors at Agincourt.

And gentlemen in England, no abed,
Will think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap, whilst any speaks,
That fought with us upon this day.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY AND KEY PERSONNEL LISTING

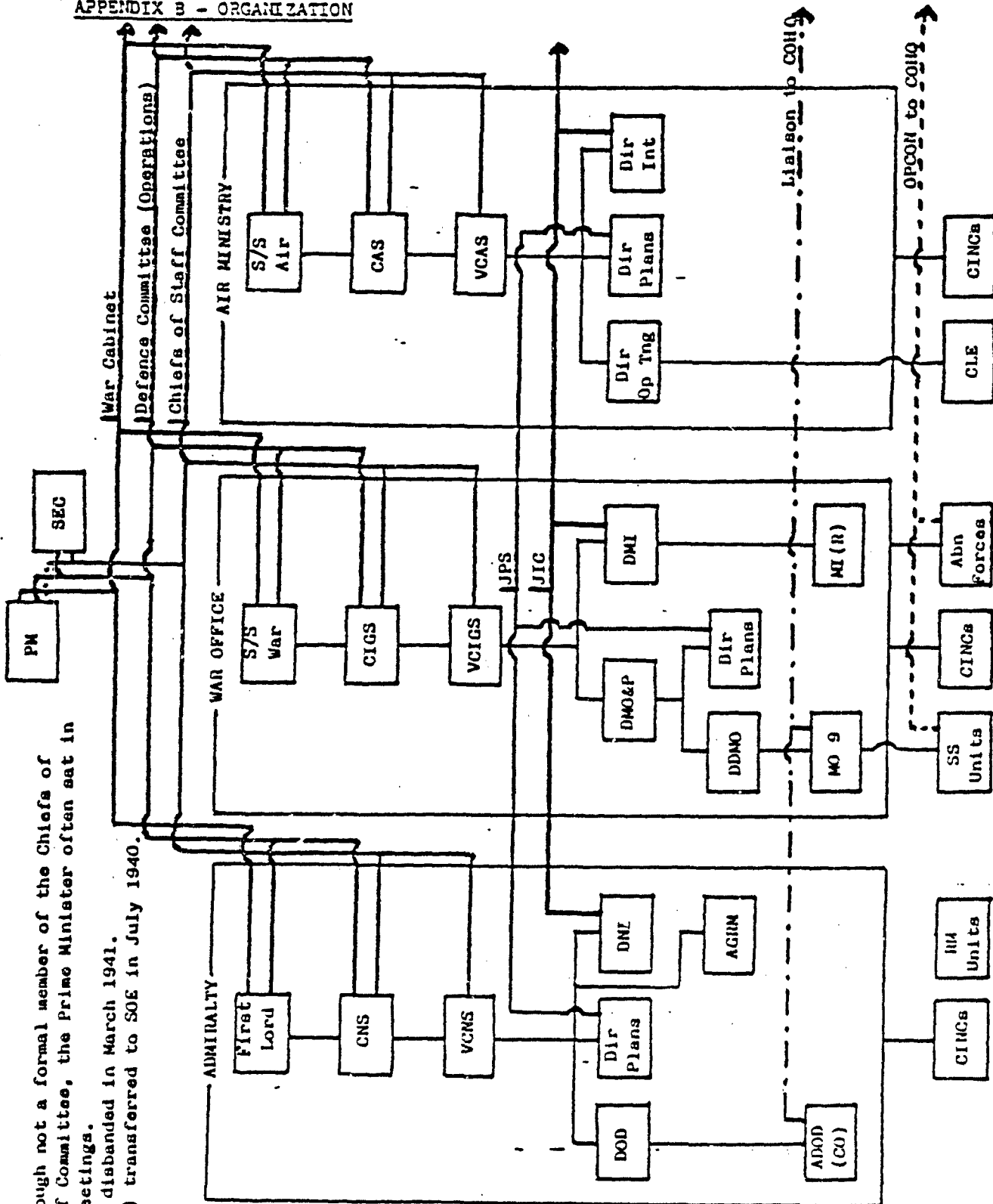
PM	PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF DEFENCE Sir Winston Churchill
SEC	SECRETARIAT Major General H. L. Ismay
	<u>ADMIRALTY</u>
First Lord	FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY
CNS	FIRST SEA LORD AND CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF Admiral of the Fleet Sir A. Dudley Pound
VCNS	VICE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF Rear Admiral T. S. V. Phillips Vice Admiral H. R. Moore
DOD	DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS DIVISION
ADOD(CO)	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS DIVISION (COMBINED OPERATIONS) Captain R. A. Garnons Williams
Dir Plans	DIRECTOR OF PLANS
AGRI	ADJUTANT GENERAL ROYAL MARINES Lieutenant General A. G. B. Bourne
DNI	DIRECTOR OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE
CINCS	COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, HOME FLEET Admiral Sir Charles Forbes Vice Admiral J. C. Tovey COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, MEDITERRANEAN FLEET Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham
	<u>WAR OFFICE</u>
S/S War	SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR Rt. Hon R. Anthony Eden Major Rt. Hon. O. F. G. Stanley
CIGS	CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF Lieutenant General Sir John Dill
VCIGS	VICE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF Lieutenant General Sir Robert Haining Lieutenant General Sir Henry Pownall
DMO&P	DIRECTOR OF MILITARY OPERATIONS AND PLANS Major General R. H. Dewing Major General J. N. Kennedy
DDMO	DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF MILITARY OPERATIONS Brigadier O. M. Lund
MO 9	MILITARY OPERATIONS 9 Colonel D. W. Clarke
Dir Plans	DIRECTOR OF PLANS
DNI	DIRECTOR OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

MI(R)	MILITARY INTELLIGENCE (RESEARCH)
CINCs	COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOME FORCES Field Marshal W. E. Ironside General Sir Alan Brooke
SS Units	'SCISSORSFORCE' Brigadier C. McV. Gubbins 'LAYFORCE' Brigadier R. E. Laycock SPECIAL SERVICE BRIGADE Brigadier J. C. Haydon
S/S Air	<u>AIR MINISTRY</u>
CAS	SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Cyril Newall Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal
VCAS	VICE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF
Dir Op Tng	DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL TRAINING
Dir Plans	DIRECTOR OF PLANS Air Commodore J. C. Slessor
Dir Int	DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE
CLE	CENTRAL LANDING ESTABLISHMENT Squadron Leader L. A. Strange
Min of EW	MINISTER OF ECONOMIC WARFARE Rt. Hon. Hugh Dalton
MEW	MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC WARFARE
SOE	SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE
EH	ELECTRA HOUSE (or CS, Campbell-Stuart)
Sec D	SECTION D
S/S For Aff	<u>FOREIGN OFFICE</u> SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax Rt. Hon. R. Anthony Eden
SIS	SECRET INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (or MI 6, Military Intelligence 6, involved in foreign espionage)
S/S	<u>HOME OFFICE</u>
MI 5	SECRETARY OF STATE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE 5 (involved in domestic counter-intelligence)
COMHQ	<u>DIRECTORATE OF COMBINED OPERATIONS</u>
DCO	COMBINED OPERATIONS HEADQUARTERS DIRECTOR OF COMBINED OPERATIONS Lieutenant General A. G. B. Bourne Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes
UDCO	DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF COMBINED OPERATIONS Lieutenant General A. G. B. Bourne Brigadier A. Hornby

ADCO (N)	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF COMBINED OPERATIONS (NAVAL)
ADCO (M)	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF COMBINED OPERATIONS (MILITARY)
ADCO (A)	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF COMBINED OPERATIONS (AIR)
ISTDC	INTER-SERVICES TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
CTCs	COMBINED TRAINING CENTRES

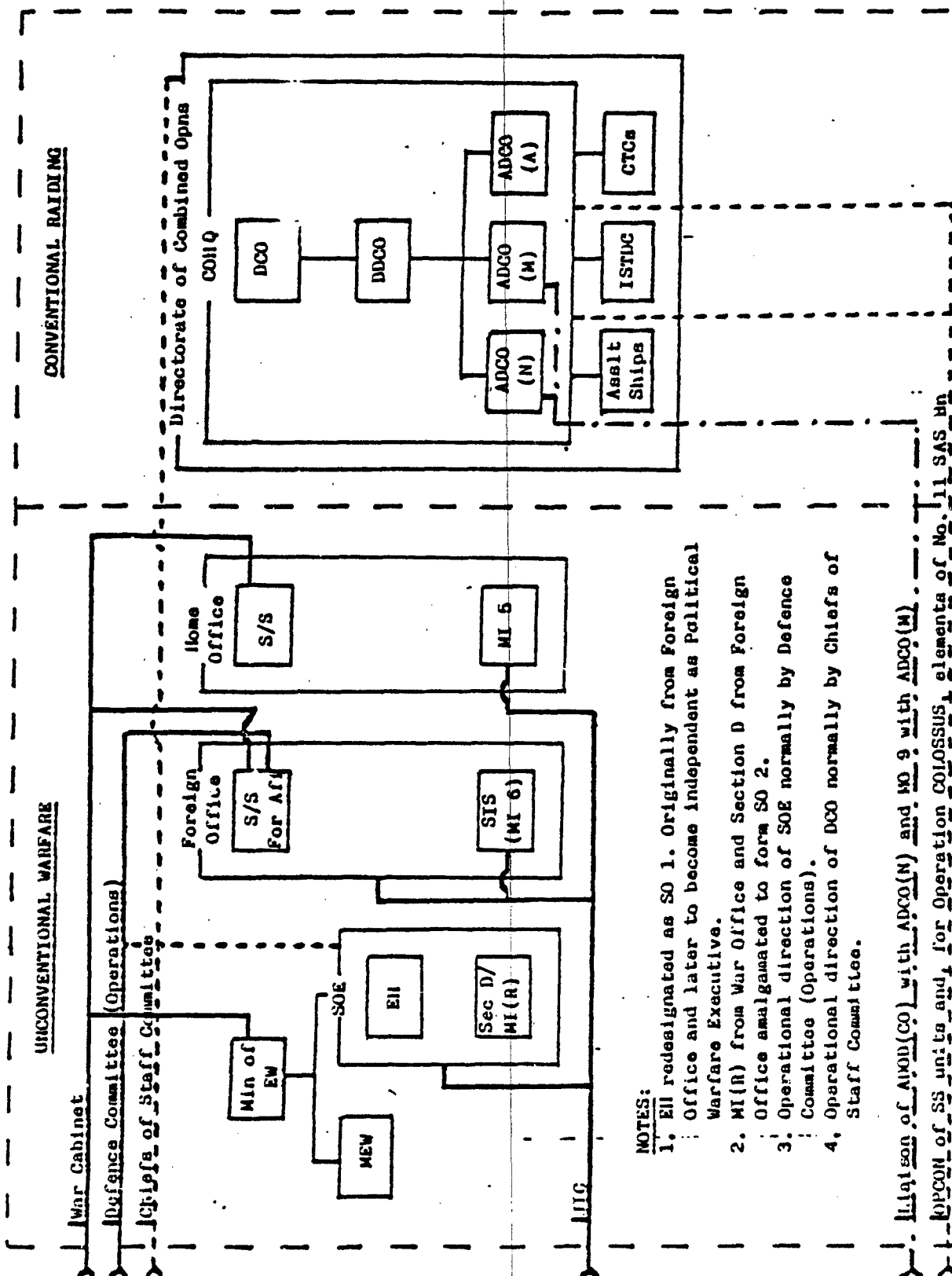
APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B - ORGANIZATION



NOTES:

1. Although not a formal member of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, the Prime Minister often sat in on meetings.
2. MO 9 disbanded in March 1941.
3. MI(R) transferred to SOE in July 1940.



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Until 1945

PREM 3--Operational Papers

B. Cabinet Files

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Meetings and Memoranda

CAB 54--Committee of Imperial Defence, Deputy Chiefs of Staff
Committee Meetings and Memoranda and Deputy Chiefs of
Staff Sub-Committee on Inter-Service Training Meetings
and Memoranda

CAB 65--War Cabinet Meetings, including Confidential Annexes

CAB 66--War Cabinet Memoranda, (WP) and (CP) Series

CAB 69--War Cabinet, Defence Committee (Operations), Meetings
and Memoranda

CAB 79--War Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff Committee Meetings, including Meetings (O) and Secretary's Standard File

CAB 80--War Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff Committee Memoranda, including (O)(JP) Series

CAB 82--War Cabinet, Deputy Chiefs of Staff Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings and Memoranda, including Deputy Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee on Inter-Service Training

CAB 84--War Cabinet, Joint Planning Committee Meetings and Memoranda and Joint Planning Sub-Committee (ISPS) Meetings and Memoranda

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ADM 202--Royal Marines War Diaries

D. War Office Files

WO 33--Reports and Miscellaneous Papers

WO 106--DMO&I Papers

WO 163--War Office Council and Army Council

WO 193--Director of Military Operations Collation Files

WO 216--CIGS: Papers

E. Air Ministry Files

AIR 2--Air Ministry Correspondence, including AIR 2 Code 74, Training and AIR 2, Code 88, Army

F. Ministry of Defence Files

DEFE 2--Combined Operations Headquarters Files

3. UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

War Diary of No. 2 Commando/No. 11 AS Battalion, located at the Airborne Forces Museum, Browning Barracks, Aldershot, UK.

'The History of No. 1 PTS' and miscellaneous correspondence, located at No. 1 PTS Museum, RAF Brize Norton, UK.

Papers of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, located at the British Library.

Papers of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor, located at the RAF Museum, Hendon, UK.

Diary of Major General R. H. Dewing, in possession of his son, Mr. W. Dewing.

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